A Man of Devon

John Sinjohn

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BY

JOHN SINJOHN

AUTHOR OF
'VILLA RUBEIN,' 'JOCELYN,' 'FROM THE FOUR WINDS,' ETC.

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TO

MY FATHER

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I.

MOOR, *July 20th*, 188–.

. . . IT is quiet here, sleepy rather—a farm is never quiet; the sea, too, is only a quarter of a mile away, and when it's windy, a kind of murmur travels up the combe; but as for distraction, you must go four miles to Brixham or five to Kingswear, and then I don't think you'll find it. I should like to give you some idea of the place. It lies in a sheltered spot, scooped, so to speak, high up out of the side of the combe—behind it a rise of fields, and beyond, a sweep of down. You have the feeling of being able to see a long way, which is misleading, as you find out if you walk. It is regular Devon country, hills, hollows, hedge-banks, lanes dipping into the earth or going up like the side of a house, coppices and cornfields higgledy-piggledy, and little streams wherever there's place

for one; the downs by the cliff, all gorse and ferns, have a touch of wildness. At the end of the combe is a sandy cove with a shelf of black rock on one side, pinky-grey cliffs right away to the Head on the other, and a coastguard station above it. Just now, with the harvest coming on, everything is at its richest, the apples ripening, the trees almost overloaded with green. It's very hot, still weather; the country and sea seem to slumber under the sun. In front of the farm are half-a-dozen stone-pines that look as if they had stepped out of another part of the world, but all round the back the orchard is as lush, gnarled, and orthodox as one could desire. The house, a long, lone white building with three levels of roof, and splashes of brown about it, looks as if it might be growing down into the earth; the apple-trees overhang it like hair on a face. A fresh straw thatch was put on two years ago—but that's the only new thing about it; they say the front door, oak, with iron knobs, is at least three hundred years old. Of course you can touch the ceilings with your hand, and the windows certainly might be larger—a heavenly old place, with a flavour of age, apples, smoke, sweetbrier, bacon, honeysuckle, and, once again, age, all over it. . . .

John Ford, the owner, is a man about seventy. Figure him as weighing seventeen stone—a very big man on very long legs, with a grey, stubbly beard and grey, watery eyes; he has a short neck and

discoloured complexion; a courteous, autocratic manner; and is subject to asthma; certainly he wheezes a good deal, but his back is unbending. He wears clothes of Harris tweed,—except on Sunday, when he puts on black,—a seal ring, and a thick gold cable chain. He's one of those men whom you could never associate with anything mean or small; whom you may suspect of warm hearts and fiery impulses, but who never let you do more than suspect, from the very rigidity of their principles. A north-countryman by birth, he's been in New Zealand all his life. He looks like a man bound to be successful, and I always think of him as such; as a matter of fact this little farm is all he owns in the world. I've heard he had a very large "station" in New Zealand, and was much looked up to, keeping open house in patriarchally despotic fashion, doing everything, as one would expect, in a stern, narrow-minded, large-handed, vast way; suddenly fate seems to have brought him to grief. I don't know the story of the crash: I believe his only son helped it by losing on the turf, and then, unable to face his father, shot himself; well—if you had seen John Ford, you could imagine that. His wife died the same year. He paid up to the last penny, and came home—to live on this farm. He told me the other night he had only one relation in the world, his granddaughter, Pasiance Voisey, who lives here with him. Pasiance must

be old spelling for Patience—they pronounce it Pash-yence. She's sitting at this moment on a sort of rustic loggia that opens out of the parlour into the orchard, her sleeves rolled up, a bowl of black currants in front of her, stripping them from their stalks, ready for black currant tea. Now and then she stops, rests her elbows on the table, eats a berry, pouts her stained lips, and begins again. She has a round, little face, and a long, slender body; cheeks like poppies; a bush of black-brown hair; eyes whose pupils and irises often seem all one colour—a burnt brown; her nose is snub, her lips quick, red, and rather full, all her motions quick and soft. She loves bright colours, prefers a handkerchief over her head to a hat; quite an enigma—fascinating and revolting as a young cat. There are times when she seems all sympathy, then in a moment as hard as tortoiseshell. Impulse, always impulse; yet she has a horror of showing her feelings; sometimes I wonder whether she has any. She has an unfortunate passion for the violin.

It's queer to see her with her grandfather, queer and rather pathetic. He has a ferocious tenderness for her that I believe strikes into the roots of him. I fancy him torn between that and a cold North-country horror of his own feelings; his life with this child is a torture of which he is himself quite ignorant. In *her* I only notice a restless chafing forced into a sort of demureness, but flashing out

now and then in a mocking sentence or little, hard laugh; I believe she is fond of him too in a fashion; once I saw her kiss the top of his head when he was asleep. She will obey him generally—not always—in a way as if she could not breathe while she was doing it, as if she had set her teeth against the good he intended her to get out of it. She has had a funny sort of education,—history, geography, elementary mathematics, and nothing else; she has never been to school. She had a few lessons on the violin, but, as far as I can make out, has taught herself most of what she can do, and she can make surprising sounds with it. She knows a great deal, by the way, about birds, flowers, insects, and has three cats, with ribbons round their necks, who follow her everywhere. I came across her the other day gardening. She called out, "I've got something awfully nice for you. Hold out your hand and shut your eyes!" I "done it," and there was a large black slug—haven't got over it yet; as to her, you could put them down her back, she wouldn't mind. She's the child of the old fellow's only daughter, who was sent home to school at Torquay, and made a run-away match with one Richard Voisey, a yeoman farmer—I believe she met him in the hunting-field. John Ford was furious—it appears his ancestors used to lead ruffians on the Cumberland side of the Border—"Squire" Rick Voisey did not appeal to him. He was called

"Squire" solely because he used to play cards a great deal with a parson in the neighbourhood who goes by the name of "Devil" Hawkins. Not that the Voisey stock is to be despised. They have had this farm since it was granted to one Richard Voysey by copy dated 8th September, 13 Henry VIII. Mrs Hopgood, the wife of the bailiff,—a dear soul with cheeks like a rosy, withered apple, a quaint serenity, and an unbounded devotion to Pasiance,—showed me the document one day with an immense air of mystery and importance. "Well —I kape it, yu zay [see]. Mr Ford bey tu proud— but other folks bey proud tu. Ah!" hugging herself gently over the yellow pedigree roll, "'tis a pra-aper old fam'ly: all the women is Margery, Pasiance, or Mary; all the men's Richards an' Johns an' Rogers; old as they apple-trees."

It appears that Pasiance's father was a rackety, hunting fellow, and "dipped" the old farm to its straw roof. John Ford took a revenge after his own heart. He bought up the mortgages, foreclosed, and commanded his daughter and her husband to go on living here rent free; which they dutifully did until eight years ago, when both died, within a month of each other. The old fellow's smash came a year later, and since then he has lived here with Pasiance. I believe it is the cross in her blood that makes her so restless, wilful, irresponsible: if she had been all

a native she'd have been happy enough here, or all a stranger like John Ford himself, but the two strains struggling for mastery seem to give her no rest. This may be a far-fetched idea, but, on my soul, I believe it to be true. See her stand with lips pressed together, arms folded tight across her narrow chest, staring as if she could see right beyond the things round her; something catches her attention, her eyes are laughing, soft, or scornful all in a minute! She's eighteen, perfectly fearless in a boat, but you can't get her to mount a horse — subject of snorting to her grandfather, who spends most of his day on a lean, half-bred Dartmoor pony, that carries him like a feather, though the old fellow's feet nearly touch the ground.

They put me up here as a favour to Dan Treffry; there is an arrangement of £ *s.* *d.* with Mrs Hopgood somewhere in the background. They are none too well off; this is the largest farm about, but it doesn't bring in much. I look at John Ford, and it seems incredible he should be short of money—he is altogether too large to connect with such an idea. Queer thing, money! in the round of a sovereign there's all the laughter and tears you can get out of six books; all the beatitude of a good dinner; all the grins of forty ragged urchins well fed. Well! no one here seems much disturbed about money or anything else—an ideal place for a writer.

We have family prayers at eight every morning, then breakfast—after that freedom for writing or anything else till supper and evening prayers. The midday meal is a movable feast, one forages. On Sundays, two miles to church twice, or into John Ford's black books you go. . . . By the way, Dan Treffry himself is staying at Kingswear. He says, "I've made my pile; it suits me down here"—like a sleep after years of being too wide-awake; he had a rough time in New Zealand, until that coal mine made his fortune. You'd hardly remember him; he reminds me tremendously of his old uncle, Nicholas Treffry; the same slow, big way of speaking, with a hesitation, and a way of repeating your name with everything he says; left-handed too, and the same slow twinkle in his eyes. He has a dark, short beard, and red-brown cheeks; is a little bald on the temples, and a bit grey, but hard as iron. He rides over nearly every day, attended by a black spaniel, a lady, with a wonderful nose and a horror of petticoats. He has told me notable stories of "old John F-Ford" in the early squatter's times; some of his feats with horses live to this day; he was through the Maori wars too; as Dan says, "a man after Uncle Nic's heart."

They are good friends, with a steady respect for each other, and on Dan's part a genuine admiration; but the real attraction is Pasiance. He talks very little when she's in the room, but looks at her

in a sidelong, wistful sort of way—like his dog. She hardly takes any notice; laughs her hard, little laugh, and looks at him as if he were in the way—it would be cruel in any one else, but with her one doesn't take anything for a reasoned and definite act. Dan "makes away" with himself, but turns up again as quiet and dogged as you please.

One morning when I was writing in the orchard she came out to the beehives and began singing—

"Mister Treffrȳ,
I wish you would fly
Up into the sky,
Oh! ever so high!"

When she saw me she sang louder than ever. I thought she would begin to improvise on me, but she didn't.

I must tell you of last night, though. We were sitting in the loggia after supper. Pasiance began fingering the strings of her violin; suddenly Dan (a very bold thing for him) asked her to play.

"What!" she said, "before men? No, thank you!"

"Why not?"

"Because I hate them."

Down came John Ford's hand on the wicker table: "You forget yourself! Go to bed!"

She gave Dan a look, and went; we could hear her playing upstairs in her room something that sounded like a dance of unholy spirits; just when one thought

she had finished, it broke out again like a burst of her own laughter. John Ford's brows bristled up as black as a hat; at last he begged our pardons very ceremoniously, and stumped off indoors, wheezing horribly. The violin stopped; we heard his voice growling like the bass of an organ; down he came again, and majestically began to talk about Southdown sheep. Just as he was settled in his chair there was a soft swish, and something dark came falling through the apple-branches. The violin! You should have seen the old fellow's face! His mouth opened like a frog's, between the grey of his moustache and beard; I couldn't help feeling sorry. He got up, solemnly wiped his brow, solemnly sat down, and began talking again rather fiercely about Southdowns. Dan would have picked it up, but he got a look that stopped him. Later, from my bedroom window, I saw the old boy come out and stand looking at that wretched violin. Once he raised his foot as if he were going to stamp on it. At last he glanced round, picked it up, wiped it carefully, and took it into the house. . . .

My room is next to Pasiance's. I kept hearing her laugh, a noise too as if she were dragging things about the room. When I fell asleep the thing got into my dreams; I woke with a start, and went to the window for a breath of air. Such a breathless, black night! Nothing to be seen but the twisted, blacker branches; not the faintest stir in the leaves,

no sound but the muffled grunts from the cowhouses, and now and then a tiny sigh. I had the queerest feeling of unrest and fear, the last thing to expect from such a night; it seemed as if in the darkness the elements were at war. There *is* a something here that is disturbing; a sort of suppressed struggle. I've never in my life seen anything so appallingly irresponsible as Pasiance, so uncompromising as this old man; I keep thinking of the way he wiped that violin. It is as if a spark would set everything in a blaze. There's a menace of tragedy—or—perhaps it's only the heat, and Mother Hopgood's junket. . . .

II.

Tuesday.

. . . I've made a new acquaintance. I was lying in the orchard; presently, not seeing me, he comes along—— It occurred to me to jot him down. Here's my failure: "Middle height, with a singularly good balance, and no lumber—rather old blue clothes, flannel shirt, dull red necktie, brown shoes, cap with leather peak pushed up on the forehead. Face long and narrow, bronzed with a kind of pale, burnt-in brownness; a good forehead. Brown moustache, beard rather pointed, blackening about the cheeks; chin not visible, from the growth of the beard must be big; mouth I should judge sensuous. Nose straight and blunt; eyes grey, with an upward look, not frank because defiant; two parallel furrows down each cheek, one from the inner corner of the eye, one from the nostril. Age perhaps thirty-five. About the face, attitude, movements, something immensely vital, adaptable, daring, unprincipled." So my notebook—like most other first impressions, wrong I suppose.

He stood in front of the loggia, biting his fingers, a kind of nineteenth-century buccaneer, and I asked myself, what in the name of Providence he was doing in this galley? He began to whistle; and presently out came Pasiance in a geranium-coloured dress and no hat, looking like a tall poppy—you know the slight droop of a poppy's head, the way the wind sways its stem. . . . This strikes me as a good simile; she *is* like a poppy, her fuzzy dark hair is exactly the black, lustreless heart of a poppy, she has a poppy's tantalising attraction and repulsion all at once, something fatal, or rather fateful, about it. . . . She caught sight of me at once and shook her head; then she came walking at me, and when she was quite close, stopped dead. "This," she said, "is Zachary Pearse. That," nodding at me, "is our *lodger*." I can't convey to you the soft malice with which she made this infamous introduction. The idea, of course, had only just entered her head; she had the impulse to scratch, and she scratched. It served to make me clear out; as I left them I heard Pasiance laugh. Half an hour later I was kicking my heels against a pigstye, when up comes this fellow Pearse, with more colour in his cheeks, his eyes bright, his lips smiling.

"Glad to know you," he said. "You're a writer, aren't you?" I assented. "Of a sort!"

"Yes, of course," he remarked absently, then for

a minute or so was silent, looking thoughtfully at the pigs.

"If by any chance," he said suddenly, "you've got nothing to do just now, I could put something in your way. As likely as not you wouldn't get such another show—in a hurry."

It was about the oddest offer I'd ever heard; I told him so.

"Oh!" he said, as if I had congratulated him, "that's nothing. Walk down to the beach with me, and I might tell you; my boat's at anchor, smartest little craft in these parts. If you'd like to see her, yu can."

His *o*, *oo*, *ou*, was sometimes *u* and sometimes not, and there are other slight traces of Devon about his tongue. Well, I hadn't the smallest desire to go down to the beach, it was awfully hot—but I started all the same. We had not gone far when John Ford and Dan Treffry came into the lane. To my amazement this fellow pulled me into the hedge.

"Hold on a bit!" he said with a defiant look, as if daring me to disapprove, "I don't want him to see me." But as soon as it became evident that we must be seen, he put his hands in his pockets and advanced coolly enough. We met in the middle of the lane, where there was hardly room to pass. John Ford stopped dead, a purple rash came out all over his face and neck; he put on his

pince-nez and stared over them at Pearse. Dan looked a little sheepish, a little sullen. Pearse himself wore a sweetish smile.

"Good day!" he nodded. "Fine weather! I've been up to ask Pasiance to come for a sail. Wednesday we thought, weather permitting; this gentleman's coming. I thought perhaps you'd come too, Mr Treffry. You've never seen my place. I'll give you lunch, and show you my father. He's worth a couple of hours' sail—my father." He said it with such an odd sort of pride that I forgot to resent his impudent inclusion of me. John Ford was seized with a fit of wheezing, and seemed on the eve of an explosion; he glanced at me, however, and checked himself just in time.

"You're very good," he said icily; "my granddaughter has other things to do. You, gentlemen, will please yourselves;" and, with the slightest inclination of his short neck, stumped on. Dan and I looked at each other.

"You'll come?" said Pearse wistfully, changing his ground with me in the most unashamed manner. I assented, without knowing why. Dan stammered, "Thank you, Mr Pearse; I'm a better man on a horse than in a boat, but—thank you." When cornered in this sort of way, he's the shyest, most soft-hearted being, but the worst subject for coercion I know. Pearse smiled. "Wednesday, then, ten o'clock; you shan't regret it."

"Pertinacious beggar!" I heard Dan mutter in his beard; and a minute later I found myself marching down the lane again by Pearse's side. Then it occurred to me to be angry. I asked what he had meant by saying I was coming? He answered, quite unabashed, and taking me as it were into his confidence—

"You see, I'm not friends with the old man; but I knew he'd not be impolite to yu, so I took the liberty." Something very enlightening about that, eh? Moreover, it removed one's anger at the expense of one's curiosity. . . . We were down in the combe now, walking towards the beach; the tide was running out, the sand all little, wet, shining ridges. About a quarter of a mile out a cutter, with a tan sail half run down, swung up and down on the swell. The most heavenly evening! The sunlight across the top of the combe made all the pink in the cliffs glow, and burnished up the green along their tops; over the sea it held a perfect revel, shifting across in bright patches like shoals of golden fish. A regular colony of gulls sat on the shelf, whistling and cackling as if they were having a tea-party. Pearse perched himself on the edge of his dinghey, and looked out under his hand. He seemed lost in admiration.

"No coast like the Devon coast," I hazarded.

"Eh?" he answered in a matter-of-fact voice, and swinging his leg. "I say, if we could only net

some of those spangles an' make gold of 'em! No more work then." He brought his heel sharp up against the boat's side and frowned. The beauty of the evening was nothing to him!

"You're a writer, aren't you?" he said abruptly. "I'll make your fortune."

He clearly saw a writer in the same light as a builder—a creature to be employed, paid so much a job. He's not far wrong!

"You come with me; I'll make your fortune," he repeated, appraising my face with his upward, defiant eyes. I had to ask him what he meant.

"Tell you on Wednesday. It's a big thing; but," he went on in a sensuality of self-approval, "nothing 'll stop me. I can put this job through —if—if only——" His whole face softened, and I can't say that it improved him. In a minute he hardened up again.

"What kind of books do you write?" he asked sharply.

I gaped at him. Is there a more embarrassing question in the world?

"I suppose you write for the papers, too?" I admitted the impeachment.

"Ah!" he said, "Pasiance told me."

It was the first time he had alluded to her, and his face had that same soft, unsatisfactory look. It was past supper-time: hunger got the better of curiosity. I said good night. When I had gone

some way up the path I looked back. He was still there, on the edge of the boat, gazing fixedly at the sea. A queer, queer bird, with something attractive about him!

Nobody made any mention of him that evening; but once old Ford, after staring a long time at Pasiance, muttered *àpropos* of nothing, "Undutiful children!" She? Well, she was softer than usual; listening quietly to all the talk, smiling if she was spoken to. At bedtime she went up for his good night without waiting for the usual stentorian command, "Pasiance, child! come and kiss me!"

Dan had not stayed to supper, and he has not appeared since. This morning I sought out Mother Hopgood and asked her, "Who is Zachary Pearse?" Poor old lady! if there is anything she hates in the world it is to be committed to a definite statement. She ambled round and round her answer; at last, with a twist of her hands, admitted that he was "son of old Cap'en Jan Pearse tu Black Mill."

From certain signs I fancy it's her birthday. There's a subtle self-consciousness about her this morning, as if she knew herself to be a subject for congratulation. She is wearing a black bombazine skirt, and cap of many colours; and before breakfast Pasiance came from her flower-garden behind the orchard with a whole armful of pinks and sweet-peas. The kitchen is absolutely alive with them.

"'Tes an old family tu Dartymouth an' Plymouth," she went on in a burst of communicativeness. "They du say Francis Drake tuke five o' they Pearses with 'en tu fight the Spaniards. At laste that's what I've heard Mr *Z*achary *z*ay; but Ha-ap-good"—her husband—"can tell yu."

Poor Hopgood! the amount of knowledge he is saddled with! She gave me to understand that her own information had run dry, and at once went on—

"Cap'en Jan Pearse made a dale of ventures. He's old now — they du say nigh an 'undred. Ha-apgood can tell yu 'baout 'en."

"But the son, Mrs Hopgood?"

Her eyes above the round sweetness of her face twinkled with sudden shrewdness. She gave herself a placid hug, and murmured—

"An' what would yu take for dinner tu-day? There's duck; or yu might like 'toad in the hole,' with an apple-tart; or then, there's—— Well! we'll see what we can du, then;" and off she went in sudden, gentle haste, without waiting for my answer.

To-morrow is Wednesday. I'm not sorry to be getting another look at this fellow Pearse. Curiosity is on edge. . . .

III.

Friday, July 29th.

. . . Why do you send me letters with so many questions, and egg me on to go writing about these people instead of attending to my proper business? If you really want to hear, listen to an account of Wednesday's doings—it will be frightfully long, but it seems you won't mind that.

A splendid morning; rather to my surprise Dan turned up—I might have known though, that, when he says a thing, he does it. John Ford came out to shake hands, but remembering suddenly why Dan had come, breathed loudly, said nothing, and went in again. Nothing was to be seen of Pasiance, and we went slowly down to the beach.

"I don't like this fellow Pearse," Dan said to me on the way; "I was fool enough to say I'd go, so I've got to; but what's he after, George? Not the man to do things without a reason, mind you."

I remarked that we should soon know.

"Don't know that; a rum beggar; I never look at him without thinking of some sort of a pirate."

The cutter lay in the cove as if she had never moved. There too was *Z*achary Pearse seated on the edge of his dinghey; he came to meet us.

"Beautiful weather," he informed us; "a four-knot breeze — I'll run you down in a couple of hours." He made no inquiry about Pasiance, but put us into his cockleshell and pulled for the cutter. A lantern-jawed fellow, with spikey, prominent beard, long, clean-shaven upper lip, and tarry complexion, received us. He had a hard-weather look, a soft Devonshire tongue, a certain resemblance to a gull, and answered to the name of Prawle.

The cutter was beautifully clean; she was built for a Brixham trawler, and still has her number— DH. 113 — uneffaced. We dived into a sort of cabin, airy, but dark, fitted with two bunks and a small table, upon which stood some bottles of stout; there were lockers, pegs for clothes, &c. Prawle acted as showman, very proud of a steam contrivance for the hoisting of sails. It was some minutes before we came up again. In the dinghey, being pulled towards the cutter, sat Pasiance. Dan screwed up his eyes and looked at me.

"If I'd known this," he stammered, getting red, "I wouldn't have come. I'll make the fellow put me ashore." Pasiance held up a hand to be helped; with a rebellious look at Dan she went forward and sat down in the bows. Flat mutiny! but if she

had made up her mind to come, how could we prevent it? in any case it was no good for Dan to go on shore; I told him so. He assented sulkily. The breeze was light from the south-east; we began to slip along. The sun was warm, the air soft, the cliffs splendid, black and grey and green, and here and there a patch of red earth or the blaze of a cornfield—my mind refused to be ruffled. Zachary Pearse came and stood beside me. He looked thoroughly at home on the sea, like a man who might have been through a lot, and have a fund of stirring things to tell one; however, he began to talk about the relative value of beads, rum, and jute, with the practical appreciation of a commercial traveller; but now and then — *àpropos* of nothing—a curious unbridled sort of look came into his eyes. Presently—goodness knows how!—we began to talk "politics." He took an early opportunity of announcing himself a Liberal, but two minutes later was inveighing violently against Gladstone and the Government. "Look here!" I put in; "you said you were a Liberal." "So I am!" he answered. I suspect his Liberalism is of the sort that must have a kick at the powers that be—a foe to authority. Dan, close by,—it's hard to be far off in a ten-ton cutter,—eyed him sideways; Pasiance took no notice of any of us; Prawle steered, ruminative and hard as wood. We ran on, past Scabbacombe, Down Head, and the Beacon.

Suddenly Pasiance began singing; these are the words; perhaps you know them:—

"Columbus is dead, and laid in his grave,
Oh! heigh ho! and laid in his grave;
Over his head the apple-trees wave—
Oh! heigh ho! the apple-trees wave. . . .

The apples are ripe and ready to fall,
Oh! heigh ho! and ready to fall;
There came an old woman and gathered them all,
Oh! heigh ho! and gathered them all. . . .

The apples are gathered, and laid on the shelf,
Oh! heigh ho! and laid on the shelf;
If you want any more, you must sing for yourself,
Oh! heigh ho! and sing for yourself."

Her small, high voice came to us amidships in trills and spurts, just as the wind would let it, like the singing of a skylark lost in the blue. It startled us all. Dan went aft, as if he had been hurt, and seated himself by Prawle. It was one of her unfathomable impulses, and he mistrusts them, for he can't understand them—no doubt they seem to put him farther away from her than ever. When she had finished, Pearse went up to her and whispered something. I caught a glimpse of her face—like a startled wild animal's. She was shrinking, tossing her hair, laughing, all in the same breath. She didn't sing again, but crouched together in the bows with her chin on her hands, and the sun caught one cheek, round, velvety, red as a peach,

so naïve that you wondered how a mocking spirit ever comes to her eyes and lips. . . .

We passed Dartmouth; half an hour later hauled a bit to starboard, and stood in to a crescent-shaped little bay with sand, and trees sloping above it. Upon one side on a low reddish cliff was a house hedged by pine-trees. From the cliff base a bit of broken jetty ran out. Alongside this we hooked on and landed. An ancient, fishlike man came slouching down and took our place on the cutter. Zachary Pearse led us along the jetty towards the house, Pasiance following, with her head down, possessed evidently by an access of mortal shyness.

The house had a dark, overhanging roof of those rush reeds which grow in the marshes about here; I remember nothing else remarkable. It was not old, not new; not beautiful, nor precisely ugly; neither clean nor entirely squalid; it perched there with all its windows over the sea, as if turning a contemptuous back upon the land.

Seated in a kind of porch, beside an immense telescope, was a very old man with a panama hat, a rattan cane, pure white beard and moustache, and eyebrows almost black, giving a most singular piercing, restless look to his small, dark grey eyes; all over his mahogany cheeks and neck was a network of the finest wrinkles. His spare figure was upright in his chair; he seemed to be drinking in

the sun; so strong were his eyes that he scarcely blinked.

"Dad!" said *Z*achary, "*this* is Pasiance Voisey." The old man turned his eyes upon her, muttered, "How do yu du, ma'am?" but took no further notice. As for Pasiance, she seemed to resent this, and glowered at him from a corner, out of her hair, like a Skye terrier; then she slipped away and went wandering about amongst the pines. An old woman brought some plates and bottles and laid them rather vaguely upon a table; there we sat lolling round the stiff figure of old Cap'en Jan Pearse without a word, as if we were under the spell of his eyes and expected something illuminating from them.

Before lunch there was a curious little scene between *Z*achary Pearse and Dan, as to which of them should summon Pasiance. Neither spoke, but they looked all sorts of things. It ended in both going, and coming back without her. She did not want any lunch, would stay where she was amongst the pines.

We ate chops, wood-pigeons, mushrooms, a kind of preserve of mulberries, in a vague sort of way, without any regard to courses; and drank a wonderful Madeira out of common wine-glasses. I was moved to ask Captain Pearse where he got it; at first he made no answer, beyond looking at me with his restless eyes, then he said suddenly with a slight bow—

"Stood me in tu shillin' the bottle, an' the country got nothing out of it. Yes, sir; in the early 'Thirties; tu shillin' the bottle and a lick across the head; there's no such wine nowaday; and," he continued slowly with a look at his son, there's no such men."

*Z*achary's wine-glass was half raised to his lips. He tilted the contents into his mouth and said, "Here's luck to the Pied Witch! You've done nothing as big, Dad, as what I'm after!"

The old man's eyes had a sort of disdain in them, the son's a sort of defiance, they bent towards each other across the table to our utter exclusion.

"You're goin' far then, in the Pied Witch, *Z*ach?" said old Pearse with slow contempt.

"I am going," said *Z*achary with equal slowness, "to do a big thing."

"And *where* might yu be goin' in that trampin' smut factory?"

"Morocco."

"Heu!" said the old man ironically, "there's no pickings there; I know the lay of that coast, as I know the back o' this;" he stretched out a hand all covered with veins and hair. *Z*achary leaned back in his chair, his eyes on the ground.

"There's a fortune where I'm going, for one who knows. See here, Dad!" He spoke very fast. "Below Mogador—a fellow there—a friend of mine—it's two years now;" and so on and so

on—"Concessions—trade—Pied Witch—harbour—gunpowder—cruisers—feuds—money—chiefs—Gatling guns—Sultan—rifles—rebellion—gold." A complete story full of words—big—reckless—sordid—soft and bold—in all the tones of a flexible voice—I can't remember the half, but they represent a detailed scheme, which, on the pivot of a trading venture, is to spin a whole wheel of political convulsions. The old man's black eyebrows began to twitch.

"Yu'll never get there," he said.

"I shall," returned Zachary, "an' when I leave *there'll be another dynasty, and I—I'll be a rich man.*"

"Yu'll never lave," answered the old man, unmoved.

Zachary shrugged, drew forth a sheet of paper covered with figures, and began conning them to himself. So much—equipment, so much—trade, so much—concessions, so much—emergencies. "My last mag!" he ended, "a thousand short; the Pied Witch ready; if I'm not there within the month my chance is as good as gone."

The words were a manifest appeal, and we all looked as men will when the want of money crops up.

The old man broke the silence. He looked at the sea, his eyes more restless than ever. "Mad!" he muttered.

Zachary drew his finger slowly down the sheet

of paper, removed it thence to the palm of his other hand, clenched his fingers upon it, and looked at his father. "No!" That was all; it was more eloquent than all his other words put together. This fellow's not a "visionary"! His scheme may be daring, his ends unprincipled, his means devious, but—he knows what he's about. . . .

The old man stared.

"By Gosh!" he said, "yu shall have five 'undred of my money, if it's only to learn what yu're made of. Wheel me in!" For the first time I noticed that he's lost the use of his legs.

Zachary returned to us with a slip of paper.

"The old man's cheque for £500!" he said, holding it up triumphantly. "Mr Dan Treffry, you give me another, you shall have a third share of the profits."

I expected from Dan point-blank refusal. Not a bit of it! He asked—

"Would that clear you for starting?"

"With that," said Zachary, "I can get to sea in a fortnight."

There was a silence. Dan said slowly—

"Good! You shall. Give me a written promise! To sea in fourteen days and my fair share on the £500—no more—no less."

Again I thought Pearce would have jumped at this, but he only sat down and leaned his chin in his hand: presently he looked at Dan, and Dan

looked at him. While they were staring like this, Pasiance came up with a kitten in her arms.

"See!" she said, "isn't it a darling?" The kitten crawled slowly up and round behind her neck. Both the men's eyes had the same expression, the same longing in them. Suddenly I saw what they were at — driving a bargain! Pasiance twisted her head and the kitten rubbed itself slowly against her cheek, then, overbalancing, fell, clawing and faintly remonstrating, all down her dress. She caught it up and walked away. Some one, I don't know which of us, sighed; then Pearse cried, "Done!"

Without a word Dan drew out his cheque-book. Both seized pen and ink. A moment later they exchanged writings, looked at them carefully, and nodded.

"Good-bye, Mr Pearse," said Dan; "I guess that's all I'm wanted for. I'll find my pony waiting in the village. George, will you see Pasiance home?"

Presently we heard the hoofs of his pony going at a gallop down the road. Pearse jumped up; waving his hand at the telescope, cried, "Excuse me!" and disappeared.

He's certainly remarkable! In one sitting he's carried me away into believing in him. But this enterprise of his! How mad, absurd, presumptuous, romantic, and — matter of fact! Pounds,

shillings, and pence! A change of dynasty—and the son of a merchant skipper! Does *he* see the situation created by himself, the possibilities, those rose-edged, far-soaring chances, the enchanted stir of his own undertaking? Not he! Pounds, shillings, and pence! No doubt there's something beyond that in him, there must be—a burning in the blood, a devil of some sort, or, why should such things come into his head? But, shade of Tennyson's Richard Grenville! how brutally matter of fact! I think of all those names we read of—Drake, Raleigh, Hawkins, Champernowne, Oxenham, Chichester, Davis, Leigh—and a nasty worm of suspicion comes and eats away at the rose of Romance in my mind. What do deeds matter? what if those fellows never cared and never knew? but ploughed the seas, singed the King of Spain's beard, drank up all kinds of deaths and hardships, just for the sake of pounds, shillings, and pence, and a burning in the blood? . . . Well! I got up and walked into the shade of the pines; the ground was all covered like a bee's body with stripes and patches of gold and black; the sea blue, clouds full and sleepy; and bumble-bees booming away over the heather; it was all softness, a summer's day in Devon. Suddenly I stumbled on Pasiance and Zachary Pearse. She was looking up at him; I heard him say her name three times.

"Pasiance—Pasiance—Pasiance!" That was

all. Neither of them saw me, and I slunk away. A little later he came up, his lips and eyes full of suppressed excitement. I thought of that "Pasiance —Pasiance—Pasiance,"—of the girl's face, suddenly soft with such an odd look of surrender; I felt in a cold fury at them both. What business had he with her? And she! a child of eighteen, what business has she with love? More than all, what business have they with *each other?*

He said he did not know where she was, and on his instigation we set to finding her. After we had hunted everywhere, the old housekeeper came out to tell us that she had started for home.

"Runnin' like the wild thing she bey." Whether Zachary had known this, I can't say; he showed no surprise.

"I'll drive you to the ferry," he said; "we'll soon catch her." And presently we were jogging along the lanes behind an old half-blind grey pony. He reverted to the offer he made me when we first met.

"You come with me. I needn't explain to *you*," he said with his odious way of taking one into his confidence. "Now, to Mr Treffry yu've got to give chapter and verse; but you're a man that understands—naturally, being a writer [*sic*]. I've got to work the press, because, you see, if I once get this business started you don't know where it's going to stop; and—well—it isn't in my line. As to pay,

there's the stuff you'd get for a book—stuff to fill a library; you shall have free passage everywhere, and so much a-week."

Special correspondent to Zachary Pearse! Ye gods and little fishes! But I was still enraged, and answered as rudely as I could—but by no means as rudely as I wanted—that his scheme was mad, and that *I* was not yet mad. As a matter of fact, his scheme is altogether too sane for me; for, whatever the body of a scheme, its soul is the will and fibre of the schemer.

"Think of it," he urged, as if he could see into me. "You can make what you like of it, you know; no need to trouble about my notions. Business paragraphs, of course; that's what you're wanted for. But that's mechanical; why, even I could do it, only I won't have the time. As for the rest, why, that's as free—as free as a man."

"As a man." What a simile!

And straightway it came upon me that here, in five words of one syllable, is the kernel of Zachary Pearse—"As free as a man!" No rule, no law, no responsibility, not even the mysterious shackles that bind men to their own self-respects! "As free as a man!"—with the freedom of impulse, and blood that has the sea in it and Devon earth. *He* will never breathe the sacred and illusive breath of *ideas*. There will be no fixed star for his worship; no coil he won't slide out of, . . . and Pasiance!

What does it mean? These two natures have met. Well, what's coming? A tragedy; a comedy; a mere rubbing of passing wings; a dive into darkness? What do you say? Anyway, I ask myself if it much matters. If it should be tragedy, it will be one of those meaningless, swift, irresponsible throes—and perhaps the more poignant—that pass like the lives of insects, and seem to have no lesson for the future and no reason in the past. But then John Ford! Dan! I forgot. . . .

"Don't give me an answer!" Pearse insisted—he has the tenacity of a mastiff. "Think of it. Any day will do; I've got a fortnight." He touched the breast of his coat, and a smile came into his eyes. "A fortnight—a fortnight!" he repeated.

"Look! there she is!" I thought he meant Pasiance; but it was an old steamer he pointed out, sluggish and black in the blazing sun of midstream, with a yellow-and-white funnel, and no sign of life about her.

"That's her—the Pied Witch! Do her twelve knots; you wouldn't think it to look at her. Well! good evening! You'd better come. Think of it! a word to me at any time. I'm going aboard now. Good evening!"

As I was being ferried across I saw him lolling in the stern-sheets of a small boat, the sun on his straw hat crowning him with an undeserved glory. All the high woods and shining still rows of white

houses along the water-side that has looked on so much daring and gallantry, so many ventures into the unknown, such sea-lore and preparation,—all seemed to hold less of life than that restless little halo bobbing on the river.

I came on Pasiance, about a mile up the road, sitting moodily in the hedge, a bit of honeysuckle trailing across her scarlet Tam o' Shanter and her chin buried in her hands. She got up at once. As a rule, she is friendly with me; but I didn't know what to say and she didn't seem inclined to talk, so we walked on silently between the banks—regular Devonshire banks, so thick and high with ivy and ferns, honeysuckle, bramble and hazel boughs, that they shut off the rest of the world.

"Do you believe in a God?" she said all of a sudden. "Grandfather's God is simply awful." Her face was quite earnest and soft.

"When I am playing, sometimes," she went on without waiting for an answer, "I can *feel* God; but grandfather's is such a stuffy God—you know what I mean: the sea, the wind, the trees, colours too,—they all make one *feel*. But I don't believe life was meant to be good in. Isn't there anything better than being good? When I'm good, I simply feel wicked." She reached up, caught a flower from the hedge, and slowly tore off its petals.

"What would you do," she muttered suddenly, "if you wanted a thing, but were afraid of it?"

I murmured some foolishness like, "One should never be afraid!"

"What! Aren't you ever afraid?" she asked, looking at me with round eyes, in which a look of derision twinkled and went out; "but really and truly, aren't you *ever* afraid?"

"Afraid! Of course—twenty times a-day."

"That's nice! I like to know that—what are you afraid of?"

"Beetles, and illness, but chiefly of being afraid."

"What does that matter? If one *is* afraid, one *is* afraid; I'm not afraid of illness a bit, nor of grandfather, nor God; but—I want to be free. If you want a thing very badly, you're afraid about it."

I thought of Zachary Pearse's words, "free as a man," and stared at her.

"What are you looking at me for?" she said.

I stammered, "You'll always be free, if you are born so." She didn't answer to that, but stretched herself and yawned.

"D'you know what I shall do to-night? Guess!" I shook my head.

"Get out of my window by the apple-tree, and go to the woods, and play till I am not afraid."

"You will break your legs," I hazarded.

"Ho!" she said scornfully.

We were going down a steep lane, along the side

of a wood, near home, where there's always a smell of sappy leaves, and the breath of the cows that come close to the hedge to get the shade of the trees.

There was a cottage in the bottom, and by it a small boy sat playing with a heap of dust.

"Hallo, Johnny!" said Pasiance, bending down. The small boy smiled up.

"Hold your leg out and show this man your bad place!" The small boy with much pride undid a bandage round a bare and dirty leg, put two fingers in his mouth, and revealed a wound.

"Isn't it nasty?" cried Pasiance with rueful interest; "poor little feller! Look here, Johnny; see what I've brought you!" She fished in her pocket and produced a large stick of chocolate, the semblance of a soldier made of black sealing-wax and red worsted, and a crooked sixpence. The small boy continued to look after her with adoring eyes; we dived on into the shadows of the lane.

It was a new glimpse; such a touch of motherliness! Plainly, too, the urchin worships her. All the way home she was telling me the history of his family; when she came to his mother's death, she burst out: "A beastly shame, wasn't it, and they are so poor; it might have been anybody else instead! I like poor people," she finished, "but I hate rich ones—stuck-up beasts."

In the gateway of the farm, with her cap on one

side, her eyes looking this way and that, and one of Pasiance's cats rubbing itself against her outspread skirts, was Mrs Hopgood. At sight of us she gave vent to a series of sighs, hugging herself with a funny mixture of relief and apprehension. The cat came purring to Pasiance with a crinkled tail.

"Where's grandfather?" asked Pasiance. The old lady shook her head, caught my eye, and looked on the ground.

"Is it a row, Mums?" said Pasiance. Mrs Hopgood wriggled and murmured—

"Did you get yu're tay, my pretty? No? Well, that's a pity; yu'll be falin' low-like."

Pasiance tossed her head, snatched up the cat, and ran into the house. I remained staring at Mrs Hopgood.

"Well," she said at last, "I think I'll be goin'."

"Mr Ford?" I stammered. She clucked her tongue.

"Dear—poor lamb—well, there! So to spake its——" Suddenly, seeing me prepared to leave her, she blurted out, "Chuckin' full of wra-ath!" and seizing her skirts with both hands, made for the door at a neat little run.

To tell truth, my courage failed that evening. I spent it at the coastguard station, where they gave me bread and cheese and some very hard cider. Returning with the crusty courage a bad

meal will inspire, I passed the kitchen where a fire still burned, and two figures, all misty in the darkness, were flitting about with soft footsteps and a stealthy crackle of laughter like spirits afraid of being detected in a carnal meal. With my nose to the half-open window, I perceived Pasiance, Mrs Hopgood, and a charming odour of eggs and bacon. There was such an air of secret revelry about them, and tender enjoyment of the darkness and each other, that, stifling my pangs, I crept round and to bed in a rage. Only then I remembered Pasiance's threat of playing in the woods, and waited a long time; heard her come to bed, and at last fell asleep. Once, when I woke hours afterwards, I heard what I thought was screaming; then it sounded like wind in the trees, then like the distant shaking of tambourines, with the high notes of a human voice. Suddenly it stopped—two long notes came wailing out like sobs—then utter stillness; and though I listened for an hour or more not another sound came to break it. . . .

IV.

August 4th.

. . . Why have I not written for a week? I can hardly say; there's a lot to tell you, and now you shall have it, for at this moment I want something to keep me quiet.

. . . I have your letter before me, and I'll answer your questions. You ask whether I gauge Pasiance rightly — if the keynote to her is not her art? Well, it may be—but will she ever give it time to grow and master her; if not, can you call it the keynote? No; her playing is a kind of pagan outpouring—wilful, inconstant, uncontrolled as herself. It *might* produce something great; but, all the same, you'll see it will only sway about like a Will-o'-the-wisp. . . . Of course I don't pretend to "know" Zachary Pearse! He's as rich and varied as his native soil, slippery as a fish, material as a clod, wild as a hawk, and mysterious as the sea. Don't compare him to the old heroes, you say! *I don't.* Who knows what *they* were really made of? When one reads of them one reads indeed of their actions, but one reads also the

imaginings of the poet or the writer: it isn't the man of action who makes the hero; it's the man of action when the poet has finished with him. Such men as Zachary Pearse, no better, no worse, have made romance with a big R before now; that is, they've supplied the facts for it. As I say, it wants something else to make Romance; it wants the eye to see and the pen to write — not only the deeds, be they never so daring. Romance! Why, if you were to mention it to him, I can imagine him taking you by a button, looking up under his brows, and trying to trade it off to you for something nice and solid. . . . And yet, when I think of him, it's always on a sea under a silver mist of wind when the sailing ships look like old galleons—dim, enchanted creatures, with white horses leaping at them from the blue. There must be something not quite ignoble about a man if one can see him like that. . . .

As for me, I am here like the hole in the centre of a whirlpool, nothing to do with the whirlpool except to see it go round and round. Only, being the human hole of a human whirlpool, according to my kind I'm always looking out for the end.

For three days after I wrote last nothing at all happened. I spent the mornings on the cliff trying to write, and watching sun-sparks raining into the sea. It's grand there with the gorse all round one, gulls basking on the rocks, partridges calling in the corn, and once in a while a young hawk over your

head; and the afternoons I spent in the orchard, the usual routine going on under one's nose—cow-milking, bread-baking, John Ford riding in and about on his pony, Pasiance in her garden stripping lavender-bushes, talking broad Devonshire to the farm hands, or at her bedroom window playing her violin with bent head, all to the smell of clover and cows and hay, and the sounds of hens and pigs and pigeons, a soft undercurrent of drawl, the dull thud of the farm carts, and day by day the apples getting redder and redder. Then, last Monday, Pasiance was absent from sunrise to nearly sunset,—nobody had seen her go—nobody knew where she had gone. It was a strange and wonderful day, a sky of silver-grey and blue, with a drift of wind-clouds, all the trees sighing a little, the sea heaving in a long, slow swell, the animals so restless, the birds so silent except the gulls, who gave all sorts of cries, from the laugh of an old man to the miauling of kittens.

A something wild was stirring that day; it seemed to sweep from over the downs and combe and cliffs, into the very orchard and house, like a passionate piece of music that strikes suddenly on your ears when you are sleepy. Who would have thought the unexplained absence of that girl for a few hours could have wrought such havoc in a quiet house! We all went about like uneasy spirits; Mrs Hopgood's apple face seemed absolutely to wither. I came across a dairymaid and a farm hand hazarding wild conjectures with stolid,

downcast visages. Even Hopgood, a man with immense shoulders and a face hard-bitten out of mahogany, forgot his imperturbability, and at last harnessed his best horse, adjured him to "Pull up, 'arse!" and departed on what he assured me half-a-dozen times was a "wild guse chaace." It was a long time before John Ford gave any sign of noticing that anything was wrong, but late in the afternoon I found him sitting in a chair, his great legs apart, leaning his hands on his knees, and staring before him. He turned his head and said half to himself, "What is it?" and presently, "in the blood—in the blood." He rose heavily, said to me, "You must forgive this discomfort—I am quite ashamed," and stalked out of the room. The old fellow must have been thinking of his own children. In the evening, just as I was starting for the coast-guard station to ask for help to search the cliff, Pasiance appeared, walking as if she could hardly drag one leg after the other, her cheeks crimson with the flush of over-fatigue, and biting her lips to keep tears of weariness out of her eyes. She passed me in the doorway without a word. Her reception by the old man was queer to see; it was as if the pent-up anxiety of the day forbade him to utter a sound. He came forward, stooped above her, took her face in his two great hands, lifted it up for one great kiss, and walked away. Pasiance dropped on the floor in the low, dark passage, and buried her face on her arms. She would say nothing but

"Leave me alone!" After a little she dragged herself upstairs. Presently Mrs Hopgood came to me.

"Not a word will she say—not a bite will she ate, an' I had a pie for her—scrumptious;" then in an awe-struck whisper, "The good Lord knows the truth—she asked for brandy; have yu got any brandy, sir? Ha-apgood 'e don't drink it, an' Mister Ford 'e don't allaow for anything but caow-slip wine. Happen yu——"

I had whisky, and gave it her.

"Take her that—she won't know the difference."

The good soul seized the flask, and seemed to hug it as she disappeared. She returned it to me later half empty.

"Lapped it like a kitten laps milk. I misdaoubt it's straong, poor lamb, it lusened 'er tongue praaperly. 'I've done it,' she says, 'Mums—I've done it,' an' she laughed like a mad thing; and then, sir, she cried, an' kissed me, an' pusshed me threw the door. Gude Laord! What is't she 'as done?" . . .

I pass over the next two days; they were all blurred with true Devonshire rain. About five o'clock yesterday the rain ceased; I started off to Kingswear on Hopgood's nag to see Dan Treffry. I rode through the lanes—every tree, bramble, and fern was dripping bells of water, and shining like fairyland; the earth looked like a chain of red puddles; and each bird was singing from the very

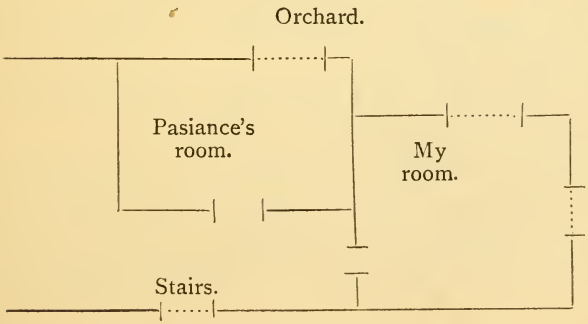
bottom of his heart. I thought of Pasiance all the time. That absence of hers was still a mystery; I kept asking myself what it was she had done, this silent, passionate, fitful child? And, whatever it was, it was wrong—she has no business with actions. There are some people who never grow up—I say they've no business with actions: actions are hard things, have consequences, inevitable and ruthless—what have children to do with such? . . .

Dan was out. I had supper at the hotel, and rode slowly home. In the twilight stretches of the road, down the lanes where I could reach either bank with my whip, and my horse was half the time on his haunches, I never got away from thinking of Pasiance and the old man and how it would work out: there was something in the half light, I suppose, that suited the wonder and uncertainty. It had fallen dark before I rode into the straw yard. Two young bullocks snuffled at me, a sleepy hen got up under the horse's hoofs and ran off with a most tremendous shrieking. I got rid of my beast, and walked round the back of the house. It was pitch black under the apple trees, and all the windows were darkened. I stood there a little, everything smelt so good after the rain; suddenly I had an uncomfortable sensation of being watched. Do you know that feeling on a dark night? It's one of the most disturbing you can have. At last I called out, "Is any one

there?" Not a sound! I walked to the gate—nothing! The trees still dripped with tiny soft hisses, and the farmyard is never still, but that was all. I slipped round to the front, and let myself in, barricaded the door, and groped up to bed. But I couldn't sleep, I had the feeling so strongly on me; I lay awake a long while; dozed at last, and woke with a jump. There was a stealthy murmur going on near, like smothered voices. It stopped. A minute passed; suddenly came the soft thud as of something falling; I sprang out of bed and rushed to the window. Nothing! but in the distance the tread of footsteps. An owl hooted; clear as crystal, but quite low, I heard Pasiance's sing—

"The apples are ripe and ready to fall,
Oh! heigh ho! and ready to fall."

I ran to her door, and knocked.
(Our rooms are like this:—)



"What is it?" she cried.

"Is anything the matter?"

"Matter?" she repeated, and laughed.

"Is anything the matter?"

"Ha—ha—ha—ha! Good night!" then so low—I only just heard—her breath hard caught. No other answer, no other sound.

I went back to bed and lay awake for hours. . . .

This evening Dan Treffry came, and during supper produced from his pocket a roll of music. "I went into Torquay yesterday—I don't know; the man said it was all right."

It was Bach's "Chaconne." She went on her knees before it with shining eyes; her fingers actually trembled as she turned the pages. It seems odd to think of her worshipping at the shrine of Bach—as odd as to think of a wild colt running of its free will into the shafts; but that's it—with her one can never tell.

"Heavenly!" she kept saying.

John Ford put down his knife and fork.

"It's heathenish!" he muttered. Suddenly he thundered, "Pasiance!"

She looked up with a start, threw the music from her, and resumed her place.

During evening prayers, which follow every night immediately upon food, she kept her head up and her lips obstinately shut; she left us early. It was late when Dan rose to go. For once John Ford

had been talking of his squatter's life. As we came out at last under the thatch, Dan held up his hand. "Listen!" he said—a dog was barking. "It's Lass. She's hunting; one of Pasiance's cats, I'll bet a pound."

The spaniel yelped more furiously. I started to see what it was, but Dan stopped me.

"All right, George!" he grunted, and lumbered round the corner. In a minute he was back.

"By Jove! It's queer; she's hunting down the path towards the cove; there are fresh footsteps all along. Somebody's been in the orchard; come on, George, we'll see who it is!" He ran down the path. I ran too, horribly uneasy. In front, through the darkness, came the spaniel's bark; the lights of the coastguard station showed faintly. I was first on the beach, and the dog came to me at once, her tail almost in her mouth from apology. There was a sound of oars working in their rowlocks; nothing visible but the feathery edge of the waves. Dan behind me said, "No use! He's gone." His voice sounded hoarse, like a man choking with passion.

"George," he stammered, "it's that blackguard. Wish I'd put a bullet in him." Suddenly a light burned up in the darkness over the sea, seemed to swing gently, and vanished. Without another word we went back up the hill. John Ford stood at the gate motionless, indifferent—nothing had dawned on him.

I whispered to Dan, "Let it alone!"

"No, George," he said, "no!" He struck a match, and slowly hunted the footsteps in the wet grass of the orchard. "I know something of tracking—look—here!"

He stopped under Pasiance's window and swayed the match over the ground. Clear as daylight were the marks where some one had fallen or jumped. Dan held the match over his head.

"And look there!" he said quietly. The bough of a great apple-tree that hung below the window was broken. He blew the match out.

I could see the whites of his eyes, like an angry animal's. I felt him immovably obstinate, sullen, enraged, and beyond all, hurt.

"Drop it, Dan!" I pleaded.

He turned on his heel suddenly, and stammered, "You're right."

But, you see, he had turned into John Ford's arms.

The old man stood there like some great force, darker than the darkness, more inexorable, staring up at the window like a man stupefied. We had not a word to say. He seemed unconscious of our presence, and muttered: "I never failed in my duty yet, and, by God's help, I won't now."

The tremble in his voice was more than if he had beaten his own head with his fists, or uttered a thousand curses. He left us standing there.

"Follow him!" said Dan. "Follow him—by Gad! it's not safe."

We followed him. Bending, and treading heavily, he went up the stairs, as unheeding of our footsteps as though he had been alone in the world. He struck a blow on Pasiance's door. "Let me in!" he called. I drew Dan into my bedroom. The key was slowly turned, her door flung open, and there she stood in her dressing-gown, a candle in her hand, her face crimson, and oh! so young, with its short crisp hair and round cheeks. The old man —like a giant in front of her—raised his hands, and laid them on her shoulders.

"What's this? You—you've had a man in your room?"

Her eyes did not drop.

"Yes," she said. Dan gave a groan.

"Who?"

"Zachary Pearse," she answered in a voice like a bell.

He gave her one awful shake, dropped his hands, then raised them as though to strike her. She looked him in the eyes; his hands dropped, and he too groaned. As far as I could see it, her face never moved.

"I'm married to him," she said suddenly, "married to him—d'you hear? Married to him. Go out of my room!" She dropped the candle upon the floor at his feet, and slammed the door in

his face. The old man stood for a minute as though stunned, then groped his way downstairs.

"Dan," I said, "is it true?"

"Ay!" he answered, "it's true; didn't you hear her?"

I was glad I couldn't see his face.

"Well," he said at last, "that ends it—there's the old man to think about."

"What will he do?"

"Do? Go to the fellow this very night." He seemed to have no doubt. Trust one man of action to know another.

I muttered something about being an outsider,—I supposed there was nothing I could do to help.

"Well," he said slowly, "I don't know that I'm anything but an outsider now; but I'll go along with him, if he'll have me."

He went downstairs. After a bit I followed: they had gone; a few minutes later they rode out from the straw-yard. I watched them past the line of hayricks, into the blacker shadows of the pines, then the tramp of hoofs sounded fainter and fainter in the hot, sleepy darkness, and at last faded away.

I've sat here in my bedroom writing to you ever since, till my candle's almost gone. I keep thinking what it all means, what is to be the end; whether I, who heard "Pasiance — Pasiance — Pasiance!" could have done anything. That was

the meaning of her absence! But the end? Well —it's what they will bring to themselves, those two unaccountable beings; no one else will have any hand in it. If he were only lawless with her kind of lawlessness, or she with his—they would be in the same boat, and it wouldn't matter; but hers is the sort of freedom that lives in the brain, and finds vent in all kinds of irresponsible actions; his the sort that lives in the blood, and glides out of consequences like water off a duck's back: why, he probably never thought of freedom in his life! It is *she* who will go to the wall. I'm sorry for her—sorrier than I can say. The night is so quiet—I haven't heard a sound once: is she asleep, awake, crying, triumphant—who knows? . . .

It's four o'clock; I've been asleep.

They're back, and Dan is lying on my bed. I will try and tell you his story as nearly in his own words as I can.

"We rode," he said, "round the upper way, keeping out of the lanes, and got to Kingswear by half-past eleven. The horse-ferry had stopped running; we had a job to find any one to put us across. We hired the fellow to wait for us, and took a carriage at the 'Castle.' Before we got to Black Mill it was nearly one. Pitch-dark; with the breeze from the south-east, I made out he should have been in an hour or more. The old man never spoke to me once: I tell you, before we

got to the end I began to hope we shouldn't find the fellow after all. Well! he made the driver pull up in the road; we walked round and round, trying to find the door—in that shanty the door seems to have been forgotten, like everything, I guess, that's honest. Then some one cried out, 'Who are you?'

"'John Ford.'

"'What do you want?' It was old Pearse's voice.

"'To see Zachary Pearse.'

"'Please to come in by the window where you're standing.'

"It was a long window, into the porch where we sat the other day: it stood open, and in we went. There was a door at the end of the room, and a light coming through. John Ford went towards it, I stayed out in the dark.

"'Whu'se that with yu?'

"'Mr Treffry.'

"'Let him come in!' So I followed. The old fellow was in bed, perfectly still on his pillows, a skull-cap on his head, a candle by his side; to look at him you'd think nothing of him but his eyes alive. By Gad! I would rather not have been there—those two old fellows! and it's—it's—no affair of mine—now." . . .

He stopped, and seemed to listen, then went on doggedly. . . .

"Old Pearse said, 'Sit down, gentlemen, sit down!' But we didn't, you know.

"Then he asked, 'Why du yu want to see my son?' John Ford begged his pardon, and told him, he had something to say that wouldn't wait."

"They were very polite to each other," muttered Dan. . . .

I fancy I see them, those two old men—the one standing, like a boulder, big and grey, unyielding, rugged, massive, the very embodiment of duty and laws, a stern Covenanter spirit breathing out of his nostrils, and withal polite in the dignity of his bigness; the other with the eyes you only see in sailors, deep-coloured from staring across salt wastes, cheeks brown like the leaf of a cigar, and every hair of his white beard strong with vitality; perfectly inert on his pillows, all the litheness of his fibre shut into his words and looks; polite too, in the native softness of him. Don't I see them—Cumberland man and Devon man? Let them live where they like, in either hemisphere or on all the seas, there's no getting the grain out of them. . . . Well, Dan went on:—

"'May be yu would lave your message with me,' said old Pearse.

"'What I have to say to your son is private.'

"'I'm his father.'

"'I'm my girl's grandfather,' said John Ford, 'and her only stand-by.'

"'Ah!' muttered the old chap, 'Squire Rick Voisey's daughter?'

"'I mean to see your son,' said John Ford.

"Old Pearse smiled." . . .

I can see that smile, a hollow between the white hairs of moustache and beard, half sweet, half a sneer. . . .

"'Yu cu'd never tell where *Z*ach may be. Yu think I want to shield him. You're wrong; *Z*ach's another guess sort.'

"'Your son's here!' rapped out John Ford, and old Pearse gave us a look.

"'You come into my house like thieves in the night, and yu give me the lie, du yu?'

"'Your son came to my child's room like a thief in the night; it's for that I want to see him,' and then," said Dan, "there was a long silence. At last Pearse said—

"'I don't understand; has he played the blackguard?' and John Ford answered, 'He's married her, or, before God, I'd kill him.'

"Old Pearse seemed to think this over, never moving on his pillows. 'Yu don't know *Z*ach. I'm sorry for yu, I'm sorry for Squire Rick Voisey's daughter, but yu don't know *Z*ach.'

"'Sorry!' groaned out John Ford; 'he's stolen my child, and I'll punish him.'

"'Punish!' cried old Pearse writhing; 'we don't take punishment.'

"'Don't you?' roared John Ford; 'Captain Jan Pearse, as sure as I stand here you and your breed will get your punishment of God.' Old Pearse smiled.

"'Mr John Ford, that's as may be; but sure as I lie here we don't take it of men nor of the law. Yu can't punish unless yu make to fale, and that yu ca-an't du.'" . . . Dan stopped.

Can't make to feel! that is truth, the very essence of them, father and son—no moral pulse; but how did he know it, this old sea-captain? . . .

Dan went on slowly, with a motion of his hands—

"John Ford seemed to swell. 'You won't tell me where your son is!' he sang out, and he looked big. I would have been sorry to face him, but old Pearse never blinked.

"'I won't,' he said; 'and now you may get out. I lie here an old man, alone, with no yuse to my legs, night upon night, an' the house open; any rapscallion could get in; d'yu think I'm afraid of *yu?*'

"And there it was—we were beat; we knew it, and walked out without a word. But that old man; well, I've thought of him a lot—ninety-two, they say—lying there. Whatever he's been, and they tell you rum things about him, whatever his son may be, he's a *man*. It's not what he said, nor that there was anything to be afraid of just then, but somehow it's the idea of the old chap

lying there. I don't ever wish to see a better plucked one." . . .

We sat silent; out of doors the light began to stir among the leaves. There were all kinds of rustling sounds, as if the world were turning over in its bed, and vague beginnings of odours: it was like the half-sight and understanding I have of this business; of those two old men each within hail of his end, forgetting it in their own flesh and blood, the extreme types of Englishmen dancing the same step to the tune of the same emotion, and of the girl asleep in the next room, and Zachary Pearse. What does it all amount to? In plain words, the wretchedness of an old man, at least—beyond that I can't see. The ruin of a young girl, you say? Ah! but you only ruin those who are born to be ruined. All the deeper meaning, if there is any, was like the light among those leaves; and perhaps there's no meaning, at least for our eyes—just the flare of a spark, and darkness. . . .

Suddenly Dan said—

"George! he's cheated me. I paid him to clear out and leave her alone. I'll see him to-morrow." His voice was dogged and vindictive. If he goes, I go too. It's true enough! a bargain was driven; and Zachary has kicked a hole in it; that's all. What will he do with that other bargain? Dan said—

"D'you think she's asleep?" He sat upon my bed staring at the floor; not by a single word or gesture has he made any appeal for sympathy. He'd take pity for an insult.

"George," he said at last, "I'm as tired as a cat;" and there he is, asleep on my bed.

How long I have been writing! It's broad daylight. I too am as tired as a cat. . . .

V.

Saturday, Aug. 6th.

. . . I TAKE up the burden of events where I left off yesterday morning. . . . Dan and I started as soon as we could get Mrs Hopgood to give us some coffee. The old lady was even more tentative, more undecided and pouncing, than usual. She was manifestly uneasy: told us how Ha-apgood, who "don't slape so well" as she, had called out in the night, "Hark to th' 'arses' 'oofs!" Had we heard them? and where might we be gooin' then? 'Twas very earrly to start, an' no breakfast. Ha-apgood had said it was goin' to shaowerr (shower). Miss Pasiance was not tu 'er violin yet, an' Mister Ford 'e kept 'is room. Was it?—would there be——? "Well, an' therr's an 'arvest bug; 'tis some earrly for they!" It's amazing how she pounces on all such critters, when I can't even see them. She pressed it absently between thumb and finger, and started to work round to her question another way. Long before she had reached it we had gulped down our coffee and departed. As we rode out she came at a run, holding her skirts high with

either hand, dropped her eyes, raised them all bright and anxious in their setting of little wrinkles, and plopped out—

"'Tidden ['tisn't] sorrow for 'err?"

A shrug of the shoulders was all the answer I could manage. We rode by the lanes: through farmyards all on the slope, with a litter of mud, pigs, dirty straw, and farmers with clean-shaven upper lips and whiskers under the chin; past fields of corn, blazing on the other side of the hedges; often we were almost buried in a hollow. The larks were singing away; and my horse—Hopgood's chestnut—had a spring in his paces that you only feel when the ground is not too dry and not too wet. Up or down, we didn't draw rein till we came to Dan's hotel.

The pace had warmed me. The affair we were on seemed to have got a glow of mystery and romance, like the river gleaming before us under a kind of rainbow mist that hallowed every shape with tender lights. You know the effect I mean, when there seems a sort of affinity between the earth and the sky. You get it where there's water; I've never really seen it out of Devon. It seemed that every ship, however black and modern, on those pale waters, had something of the quality of a vision; the tall green woods, the red earth, the white houses, were all melted, as it were, into something of a whole. It was like looking into

an opal. Raining, too; but you knew the sun was shining away behind. All of a sudden a gull would swoop by—the ghost of some old greedy wanderer of the sea.

We had told our two boatmen, "The Pied Witch!" After starting with great resolution, they proceeded to rest upon their oars.

"The Pied Witch, *z*urr?" asked one politely; "an' which med 'err bey?"

That's the West-countryman all over! Never say you "nay," never lose an opportunity, never own he can't do a thing—a cross between independence, amiability, and an eye to the main chance. We mentioned Pearse's name.

"Capt'n *Z*ach'ry Pearse!" A look half-amused, half-admiring, passed between them.

"The *Z*unflaower, yu mane. Therr she bey. *Z*unflaower, ahoy!" As we mounted the steamer's black side I heard one say—

"Pied Witch! A pra-aper name that—a dandy name for 'err!" They laughed as they made fast.

The mate of the Sunflower, or Pied Witch, met us—a tall young fellow in his shirt-sleeves, tanned to the roots of his hair, with sinewy, lean, tattooed arms, and grey eyes, burnt (so to speak) in the rims from looking at weather.

"The skipper *is* on board," he said. "We're rather busy, as you see. Get on with that, you sea-cooks!" and he bawled at two fellows who

were doing nothing. There *was* a busy look about the ship: men hauling, splicing, stowing, shifting in every direction.

"To-day's Friday: we're off on Wednesday with any luck. Will you come this way?" He led us down the companion to a dark sort of hole he called the saloon. "What names shall I tell him? What!" he said to Dan, "are you Mr Treffry? Then we're partners!" A schoolboy glee came out on his face.

"Look here!" he said; "I can show *you* something," and he unlocked the door of a cabin. There appeared to be nothing in it but a huge piece of tarpaulin, which depended, bulging, from the topmost bunk. He pulled it up. The lower bunk had been removed, and in its place was the ugly body of a dismounted Gatling.

"Got six of them," he whispered with unholy mystery, through which the native frankness of him gaped at you. "Worth their weight in gold out there just now, the skipper says. Got a heap of rifles, too, and lots of ammunition. He's given me a share in the show. This is better than the P. and O., playin' deck cricket with the passengers. I'd made up my mind already to chuck that, and go for plantin' sugar; but then I ran across the skipper. Wonderful chap, the skipper! Of course, I don't know him well. I say, are you coming with us?"

He beamed with eyes and mouth, crossing his bare arms, that were as brown as an Arab's.

"I'll go and tell him you're here. He's been out all night in his cutter; only came aboard at four bells; having a nap now, but he won't mind that for *you*."

Off he went. I wondered what it was in Zachary Pearse that could impress and attract a youngster like this: probably the son of a parson—one of the usual thirteen—with frankness and perpetual youth written all over his face.

He came back with his hands full of bottles.

"What'll you drink? The skipper'll be here in a jiffy. Excuse my goin' on deck. We're so busy, you see."

And in five minutes Zachary Pearse did come. He made no attempt to shake hands, for which I respected him, and, sitting on a table, swung a leg. His face looked a little worn—a thought more defiant than usual.

"Well, gentlemen?" he said at last. I was plucking up tongue to stammer something, when Dan broke in—

"What are you going to do?"

Pearse looked at him. "No man puts a catechism to me," he said slowly; "and I don't know, gentlemen, that it's any of yure business." The only sign he gave of emotion was the sudden broadening of his accent.

Dan took a step forward; his little eyes looked for all the world like an angry pig's.

"You've got £500 of mine," he said.

"Ah!" said Zachary.

"What d'you think I gave it you for?"

Zachary bit his fingers.

"That's your look out," he said. "I sail on Wednesday. Your interest's safe."

"D'you know what I think of you?" said Dan.

Zachary flashed out—

"No, and yu'd better not tell me!" Then, with one of his peculiar changes, he smiled, "As you like, though."

Dan's face was gloomy with puzzled anger—it was altogether beyond him.

"Look here!" he broke out; "never mind that! Give me a plain answer. What are you going to do about her?"

Zachary looked up at him from under his brows.

"Nothing."

"You've married her. If you're cur enough to deny it you may; I say you've married her."

"Well?" said Zachary.

"What in God's name did you do it for?"

"You've no monopoly, Mr Treffry."

"To put a child in that position! Haven't you the heart of a man? What d'ye come sneaking in at night for? Married her—by Gad! Don't you know you've done a beastly thing?"

Zachary's face darkened, his fingers were crisped together; it was touch and go. Somehow he shut himself together with his arms; I liked him that minute. Out came his answer.

"You loved her too;—what right have you to talk to me? Was I going to leave her to you? On Wednesday she'd have sailed with me; I gave her my promise. You came with your dog, and your puzzivanting. The fat's in the fire! There's nothing to take her for now. I sail on Wednesday. I'll come back to her a rich man, or not at all."

"And in the meantime," I slipped in, "what about her?"

He turned to me; there was a change in his voice—it was ingratiating, buoyant, yet not without a touch of defiance.

"Show me the man who'll say I've not married her! I would have taken her right enough to save the fuss of this—I—I *would*" (ah! would he?) "—but it's come, and whose fault is that? I'm on a risky job. To have her with us might ruin the whole thing. 'Tisn't safe for her, I tell you; and what's more, I don't see the use."

He seemed to have no conception of what he had done, of what he had taken on himself; he seemed to think he could play shuttlecock with his obligations.

I said, "You promised her. Do you think she'd

have married you if she'd thought you were going to leave her like this? Think of her position! If you can't take her, you ought to give your venture up. You've stolen her; her life's in your hands; she's such a child!"

A sort of quiver passed over his face.

"Such a child!" he repeated; and somehow the way he spoke stirred me a little towards him,—it showed he was suffering.

"Give it up," I urged.

All the time I was by no means clear that I was doing the right thing. It might be better that he should take her; best of all, perhaps, that he should go without her, and never come back.

He winced, and shook his head.

"Give it up?" he sighed; "why! my last farthing's in it—too big, I tell you! The chance of a life!"

"Look here!" I said; "you've married her; you *can't give her up*."

He wriggled, hunting, as it were, for some escape. He looked at me doubtfully, appealingly, as if for the first time in his life he had been given a glimpse of a dilemma—the dilemma of consequences, the dilemma his nature never recognises. I really thought he was going to give in. Suddenly, to my horror, Dan growled, "Play the man!"

Pearse turned his head.

"No!" he said; "I'll keep them both."

It was all over; perhaps he never would have yielded; perhaps only have yielded till we were gone, then taken up the old thread of his resolution. When it's born into a man to evade consequences, I suppose he'll do it to the last; and, mind you, it's not the weak men who do it, it's the vital men—the too vital men. I've been thinking it would have been necessary to beat that dilemma into his head with a coal-hammer before he could have appreciated it properly. Anyway, it doesn't matter—I knew we'd come to the end of our tether. I wanted to get away, but Dan had not done.

"To your last day you shall answer to me for the way you treat her—and mind you, Mr Pearse, I can hold on."

They looked at each other like two angry dogs, then Zachary smiled.

"D'you see that fly?" he said; "well—I care for you as little as that," and he flicked the fly off his white trousers; "Good morning!" . . .

The noble mariners who manned our boat pulled lustily for the shore, but we had hardly shoved off when a storm of rain burst over the ship, and she seemed to vanish, leaving a picture on my eyes of the mate waving his cap over the rail, with a tanned face bent at us, all smiling, keen, and friendly, as who should say, "You're off now; coming back, of course—part of the show, eh? Splendid business!" . . . We reached the shore drenched, angry with

ourselves and each other; I mounted sulkily and rode home.

"The apples are ripe and ready to fall,
Oh! heigh ho! and ready to fall."

The tune ran in my head; as I rode by an orchard, an apple, loosened by the rain-storm, came down with a thud.

"What now?" I kept thinking. I was no use—could only be in the way. I made up my mind to pack and clear out, half-heartedly, for there's a strangeness, a sort of haunting and utterly inexplicable fascination about it all, that acts on me as a flame to a moth: probably to you it only seems a sordid piece of folly, but then you don't know the people. After all, what is it that puts a spell on one in life? The good? the obvious? the useful? For the most part I think it's the bizarre, the dimly seen, the inexplicable for good or evil.

The sun was out again when I rode up to the farm; the yellow thatch shone through the trees as if covering a whole store of gladness and good news. It was baking-day—the smell of new bread would have cheered anybody's heart, and, I can tell you, just then I thought of nothing but breakfast, and how to get a good one.

As I entered John Ford opened the parlour door and asked me to come in.

He began with a ceremonious apology, which made me feel more than ever an intruder; what is the good of apologising for this sort of thing? Besides, I was hungry. He said—

"I have not spoken to my granddaughter yet—I waited to see Dan Treffry. Where is he?"

He looked stern and sad-eyed, like a man with an immense burden on his shoulders. His face was even more discoloured than usual, as if he had not slept; his dress a little out of order, as though he had not taken his clothes off. He is not a man you can pity; he inspired, rather, a kind of awe in me. I felt I had taken a liberty in knowing of this matter, in doing even as much as I had done. I told him in a few words. He snorted slightly, bent his head, and walked a step or two.

"It was very good of you to take this trouble. I thank you. . . . It is indecent that it should have to be done; but since such things have come to pass——" and he made a gesture that was full of a certain horror. He gave me the impression of a man whose pride was struggling against a mortal wound. Presently he asked—

"You saw him, I think you said? He admitted this underhand marriage? Did he give any explanation?"

Standing before this old man, with his inflexible will and sense of duty, I felt myself swing over to Zachary Pearse, as if I held a brief for him, and

must in justice put forward exactly his point of view. I fished for just the right sort of words, all the time looking in his eyes to see if I were making any impression.

"You see," I kept repeating; "you see——" but I knew that he did not see.

"Let me understand," he said heavily at last. "He stole her, you say, to make sure; and deserts her within a fortnight."

I began stammering, "This venture of his—he says he would have taken her——"

"Do you believe that?"

Did I believe it? — I don't know. Before I could answer I saw Pasiance at the window. She had come in unheard, and stood, dressed in white, her face bent a little forward, her lips twitching. How long she had been there I can't say; it could not have been long.

She cried out, "Is it true?"

"Is what true?" I stammered.

"That he is going to leave me."

I could only nod my head.

"Did you hear him? You—your own self?"

"Yes."

She stamped her foot.

"But he promised! Oh! he promised!"

John Ford took a step towards her.

"Don't touch me, grandfather! I hate my life; let him do what he likes, I don't care."

I was watching John Ford's face; it seemed to turn all grey in one minute.

"Pasiance," he said; "did you want to leave me so much?"

Her eyes darkened in that peculiar way they have. She looked straight at us out of her fuzz of hair, and said sharply—

"Oh! What's the good of telling stories. I can't help its hurting you."

"What did you think you would find away from here?"

She laughed.

"Find? I don't know—nothing; I wouldn't be stifled anyway. Now I suppose you'll shut me up because I'm a weak girl, not strong like *men!*"

"Silence!" said John Ford; "I will make him take you."

"You shan't!" she cried; "I won't let you. He's free to do as he likes. He's free—I tell everybody—free!"

She ran through the window and vanished.

John Ford with a sudden movement put his hands to his head. I did what I ought to have done before—left the room.

I was really hungry by then, having had a twelve-mile ride, a good deal of excitement, and nothing but a cup of coffee. I went to the kitchen, where I found Hopgood sitting at the table, his square back against the whitewash of the wall, eating

bread and cheese. He jumped up on seeing me, and with a sympathetic grin brought me some cold bacon and a pint of ale.

"I thart I shude be seeing yu, zurr," he said between his bites at the cheese; "therr's no thart tu 'atin' 'bout the 'ouse tu-day. The old wumman's puzzivantin' over Miss Pasiance. Young girls are skary critters"—he brushed his sleeve across his broad, hard jaws, and filled a pipe — "specially when it's in the blood of 'em. Squire Rick Voisey werr a dandy; an' Mistress Voisey—well she werr a nice lady tu, but" — he rolled the stem of his pipe from corner to corner of his mouth—"she werr a pra-aper vixen."

I finished as quickly as I could, for though Hopgood is a good fellow, and I believe as soft as he looks hard, he's not exactly the person one would choose to discuss this affair with. I went upstairs, hauled out my boxes, and started to pack, but after a bit dropped it for a book, and somehow or other fell asleep on my bed.

I woke, and looked at my watch; it was five o'clock. I had been asleep four hours. There was a single sunbeam slanting across from the southern to the eastern window of my room; they were both open. I could hear the cool sound of the milk dropping into the pails; then, all at once, came a hushed stir of smothered alarm, and the sound of heavy footsteps.

I opened my door. Hopgood and a "coast-guard" were carrying Pasiance slowly and carefully up the stairs. She lay in their arms without moving, her face as white as her dress, a scratch across the forehead, and two or three drops of dried blood. Her hands were clasped, she slowly stiffened and crooked the fingers. When they turned at the top of the stairs, she opened her lips, screwed them together again, and gasped, "All right, don't put me down. I can bear it." They passed, and, with a half-smile in her eyes, she said something to me I couldn't catch; then the door was shut, and the exciting whispering began again below. I waited for the men to come out, and caught hold of Hopgood. He wiped the sweat from his forehead.

"Poor young thing!" he panted; "she fell—down the cliffs — 'tis 'err back — coastguard saw 'err—'twerr they fetched 'err in. The Lord 'elp 'err—she's young; mebbe she's not broken up much! An' Mister Ford don't know yet. I'm goin' for the doctor."

There was an hour or more to wait—but he came at last, a young fellow, almost a boy, with a very clean-shaved face and straight back, and a habit of striking the side of his leg with his fingers, as if he were switching leather leggings with a riding-cane. He looked awfully grave when he came

from her room, with a gravity the shape of his face could hardly carry.

"The old woman there—fond of her? nurse her well? . . . Fond as a dog!—good!! Don't know—can't tell for certain! Afraid it's the spine, must have another opinion! I say—what a plucky girl! Tell Mr Ford to have the best man he can get in Torquay—there's C——. Be round the first thing in the morning. Keep her dead quiet. Left a sleeping draught; there's nothing else to be done; she'll have fever to-night. Poor girl! I'm sorry."

There was no humbug about him. John Ford came in at last, and had to be told. What it must have cost him not to go to her for fear of excitement! How many times in the next hours didn't I hear his feet stop at the bottom of the stairs, ascend three or four, and stop again; his heavy wheezing; a sigh; the sound of his feet once more descending! About eleven, when I was just thinking of going to bed, I heard my name called. Mrs Hopgood stood outside plaiting her hands.

"Will yu come, sir; she's asking for yu. Naowt I can *zay* but what she will see *yu; zeems* crazy, don't it?" A tear trickled down the old lady's cheek. "Plase tu come, sir; 'twill du 'err 'arm mebbe, but I dunnoo—she'll fret else."

I slipped into the room. Her head, with all its

bush of frizzy hair, was sunk deep in the pillows, spots of colour glowed in her cheeks. She breathed quickly with half-closed eyes. There was nothing to show that she had wanted to see me, or even knew that I was there. A candle was set on a chair by the bedside, but the wick had been snuffed too short, and it gave a very faint light; both window and door stood open, still there was no draught, and the feeble little flame burned quite still, casting a faint yellow stain on the ceiling like the reflection of a buttercup under a chin—they're too low, these ceilings, far too low! The wide, squat window has no bars, and the apple branches fell across it in black stripes which never stirred. It was too dark to see anything clearly. At the foot of the bed was a chest and dresses hanging above it, and there Mrs Hopgood had taken her seat, hugging herself, and always, as it seemed to me in the darkness, moving her lips as if she were speaking. There's the same smell as in my bedroom, the same half-acrid, half-musty smell of age, but here there were other scents too, of mignonette, apples, and of a peculiar, fresh, clean-smelling soap; no carpet on the floor, and not one single dark object in the whole room except the violin, hanging from a nail over the bed. A fat, round, cheap little clock ticked solemnly. I sat down and looked at Pasiance.

"Why won't you give me that stuff, Mums?"

she said in a faint sharp voice; "it's so brutal, this pain; the doctor said I might have it if I didn't sleep by twelve; it must be hours past that."

"Where is the pain?" I asked.

"Where?—everywhere; of course it's everywhere."

She turned her face towards me; her eyes opened.

"Did you think I did it on purpose? I thought you would be certain to think that—but you're wrong, you see. If I had, I'd have done it better than this. I wouldn't have this beastly pain." Suddenly she put her fingers to her eyes. "It's horrible to complain, isn't it? Only it's so bad! but I won't again—I—promise."

I could think of nothing to say. It was not yet twelve, but it was better to give her the draught than to let her suffer so. She took it gratefully, making a face after it like a child with a powder; then lay still a minute.

"How long do you think it'll be before I can play? Oh! I forgot—there are other things to think about." She held out her hand to me. "D'you see the ring? A married woman—isn't it funny? Ha, ha, ha! Nobody will ever understand about that—that's funny too. Poor Gran! Only *you*, perhaps—you might understand; that's why you're here, you know, because you under-

stand; does it feel funny to be in my room? Suppose they said, 'Pasiance Voisey, give a reason'—but you see, there isn't one, there's only *the* reason—that's *me;* that's the only reason, *you* understand that, don't you? Of course I'm talking to you; Mums is there—Mums is always there, but she doesn't count, you see; Mums doesn't count because—why don't you count, Mums?"

The fever was fighting against the draught; she had tossed the clothes a little back from her throat, and now and then raised one thin white arm and thin brown hand a little, as if it eased her; her eyes had grown larger, and innocent like a very child's; the candle, too, had flared up, and burned clear in a long, thin flame.

"Nobody is to tell *him—nobody* at all; promise me! . . . If I hadn't slipped, it would have been different, I suppose; what would have happened then? But you couldn't tell that, even though you understand; and *I* couldn't—isn't that funny? Not to be able to tell about yourself! Can you tell about *yourself?* If you know all the circumstances, I mean? But it doesn't matter, does it? Because in the end, you see—— Do you think I loved him? Nobody marries without love, do they? Not *quite* without love, I mean—but that doesn't matter, either. There isn't any reason but *me;* I wanted to be free, he said he would take me; but to be left here after all! I won't be

left here now! D'you hear? I won't be left! When I went out this afternoon, I ran, to get away from everything; and when I came to the cliff—that bit where the ivy grows right down"—her voice was slower—"there was just the sea there, underneath; so, suddenly, I thought I would throw myself over and it would be all quiet like the sea: I climbed on a ledge, it looked easier from there, but it was so high, I wanted to get back; and then my foot slipped; now it's all pain. You can't think much, can you, when you're in pain?"

She smiled, but I could see from her eyes that she was fast dropping off.

"Of course, really, it—was much—better to live, because nobody can take you away from—yourself. Somebody said that the other day—why! it was you, so, you see, you—do understand. Nobody is to—tell *him*. You—promised,—I don't—want you—to go away, because——" Her eyes closed, she fell fast asleep.

I went to bed, but I was far too restless and disturbed to sleep. Words kept running in my head—"Pasiance, Pasiance, Pasiance"—"But it was so high, I wanted to get back"—"So you see, you *do* understand"—"Nobody marries *quite* without love"—"If you know all the circumstances, I mean"—"Of course it's much better to live."

More than once I sat up in bed with a start.

What if this is the end of her? The spine, you know. Good God! Such a little thing! "I wanted to get back!" It's pretty pitiful.

All the morning I have been writing to you. They don't seem to know whether she is better or worse; it has been something to do. . . .

VI.

Tuesday, Aug. 9th.

It is three days since I wrote, and seems more like three weeks. How slowly the time passes in a sick-house! . . . There is no more hope. The doctors were here this morning, they give her forty hours. Not a word of complaint has passed her lips since she knew. To see her you would hardly think her ill; her cheeks have not had time to waste or lose their colour. There is not much pain, but a slow, creeping numbness. . . . When they told her (it was John Ford's wish) she turned her head to the wall, and sighed; then to poor old Mrs Hopgood, who was crying her heart out, she said, "Don't cry, Mums, I don't care."

When they had gone, she asked for her violin. "I can play now," she said, "it can't hurt me." She made them hold it for her, and drew the bow across the strings; but the notes that came out were so trembling and uncertain that she soon dropped the bow and broke into passionate weeping. I hope I may never hear anything like it again;

and how long it lasted! But since, not a complaint or moan of any kind. . . .

Well, I don't care to think about that, it's too pitiful. On Sunday, the day after I wrote to you, as I was coming back from a walk I met a little boy strolling along, and making mournful sounds on a tin whistle. When he saw me he turned up a wide mouth.

"Coom ahn!" he squeaked; "the Miss wahnts tu sey yu," and resumed his mournful noises.

I took off my boots, and went to Pasiance's room. In the morning she had seemed better, but now looked utterly exhausted.

"Is the door shut? What a long time you've been! . . . It's this," she took a letter from under the clothes, and held it out to me. "I don't seem to understand it at all—it's being tired. If you were to read it, perhaps." . . .

I took the letter, two closely written sheets. It was from Zachary Pearse, and began "Sweetheart." . . .

"You don't want me to read this?" I said.

"Yes," she answered; "please read it—he wants me to do something—but I can't think, and my eyes feel funny."

"But," I said as softly as I could, "it's not for any one but you."

"Oh! read it, read it!" she cried passionately; "what does it matter?"

I read it to her slowly in a low voice, for Mrs Hopgood was in the room, counting her stitches, her eyes fixed on Pasiance over the knitting. When I'd finished, she wanted me to read it again, and yet again, a third time. I couldn't make out from her face what she was thinking—sometimes she seemed pleased, almost excited, then would come a scornful, weary look, and before I'd finished the third time she was asleep, with her fingers held out for the letter. I read it once again to myself, for though I seemed to know the words by heart the general meaning had somehow eluded me, and if she asked for advice I wanted to give her the best I could. It was a remarkable letter, not very well expressed, but so vital that it seemed to bring the man right before you. I put it under her fingers, on the bedclothes, and slipped away. I had a fancy to go to the place on the cliffs where she had fallen. It was piping hot, I was glad enough to come to the point of rock where a cascade of ivy flows down the cliff; the ledge on which she had climbed was a little to my right—a mad place, it helped me to understand the wild emotions that must have been driving her. I sat down; tall ferns all round, behind —a half-cut corn-field with a fringe of poppies, swarms of harvest insects creeping and flying all about, in the uncut corn a landrail kept up a continual charring. The sky was blue right away to the horizon, and the sea beneath it such a wonderful

colour. It was like a bit of the east coast, until one looked at the cliff, a mass of living green at the top, wild and almost black below, with stains of red; or, behind, at the dips and hollows of the fields and the great white clouds hanging low down in the distance close over the land. In Devonshire you get none of those brassy, east coast skies, there are nearly always soft-shaped clouds, slumberous, but full somehow of subtle stir and change. As I lay there whole passages of *Z*achary Pearse's letter kept rising in my mind. After all he is only the man his place, life, and blood have made him. Why expect an idealist where the air is soft and things good to look on (the idealist grows where he must create beauty or comfort for himself); a Puritan, when the soil is red and the grass lush; a man of laws, when the sea stared at his fathers and himself day and night for a thousand years, full of promises of unknown things, never quite the same, a slave to its impulses? Man's an imitative animal. . . .

"What is it matters?" he wrote. "Life: life's hard enough without tying yourself with words. A thing's no good if luck's against it. I keep my end in view and try all ways; but my end is always *you*, sweetheart. Don't think hardly of me! What's the good of a promise if there's nothing to be gained by keeping it? Shall I make you happier by taking you into danger? Why! if I succeed

you're a rich woman; but I'd fail if you were with me, because I love you. I love your eyes, your lips, your hair; if I see them I'm done for. I think of you, and—— You're like a breeze from the land. Sometimes at sea a man dreams of heather and wild bees and honey — you're like that; sometimes he dreams of the apples and rolling in the grass—you're like that; sometimes he only lies on his back and wishes—you're like that, most of all you're like that." . . .

When I was reading those words a strange, half-soft, half-scornful look would come over Pasiance's face; and once she said, "But that's all nonsense, isn't it?" . . .

Then followed a long passage about what he would gain if he succeeded, about sums invested, the impossibility of failure, a hint of over-insurance, a reminder that he was an only son and the "old man has brass"; then queerly on the top of this, "The Lord give him life—I'd miss him too much." Then suddenly he bursts out, "Obligations! they talked to me of obligations! Bunkum! The obligation was done with when they sneaked on me last night. What obligation is there to do a stupid thing? A man holds chances in the hollow of his fist: if the one slides or shifts, close down on the other! You're mine! Who says you are not? Not your grandfather. 'Whom God hath joined together let no man——' No-

body else 'll come between us, if it's only that I'm the son of my father. . . . Live where you are, or go to my Dad; 'tis only a matter of two months, perhaps three. There's my mother's room. I've heard her say there was the blood of the Champernownes in her. What was fit for her is fit for the Queen. There's no one to say 'no' to your fiddle: you can play it right over the sea there; on dark nights you'll have the image of the stars in the water as thick as bees, just as if they were dancing to you. I've looked at them many times, thinking of you." . . .

The first time I read those words Pasiance whispered sharply, "Don't read that bit," and afterwards I left them out. . . . Then the sensuous part of him shows up: "There are places I could take you to. One I know, not too warm and not too cold, where you can sit all day in the shade and watch the creepers hanging and cocoanut-palms as still as still; nothing to do or care about; all the fruits you can think of to eat and drink; no noise but the parrots and the streams, and a splash when a native drops into the water-holes. Pasiance, we'll go there! With an 80-ton craft there's no sea we wouldn't know as we know our hands. The world's all right for those who can tackle it; there's lots of unknown stuff in it yet for the asking. I'll fill your lap, my pretty, and your heart with strange sounds and sights and smells so that you shan't know it

again. What's the good of a man's life to him if he sits at home?" . . .

Through all the letter—rambling, disconnected, even passionate as it was — one could trace the thread of the man's purpose — to lure and bind the girl to his will. I believe him unconscious of it; for he *is* in love with her after all, really in love. I do him that justice, which doesn't amount to much; but swing as he may, let this side or that come up, it's the grain of him all the time to be furthering his own will. He is horribly vital—vital—*c'est tout dire!* I begin to wonder less that she should have yielded.

What visions hasn't he dangled before her—commonplace enough, I daresay, but the quality of vision depends on the seer; and in some moods who knows what Pasiance saw? There was the touch of physical attraction, too — I haven't forgotten the look I saw on her face at Black Mill. But after all she married him, because — well! because she's Pasiance Voisey, who does things and wants "to get back." When you think of it, it's a sacrifice in Zachary to propose to leave her behind: he's passionately in love; perhaps he thought of her only; perhaps he is right to break his promise. What does it matter? She lies there dying; not Zachary Pearse or any other man will take her away. When I think of the letter, written all unconsciously in that dark saloon by a man

tingling with passion to this doomed girl, I feel for him a kind of pity and disgust. . . . He wrote: "I must have money. Some fellows are ashamed to own they want it; that's the sort that won't put their hands in their pockets. Money's a good thing —I want it for you, I want it for myself. I've wanted it ever since I was a little chap sitting in the fields amongst the cows. . . . In this venture, Pasiance, there's money; maybe I've got to buy it, but there's money enough to give you anything you like. I want it for you, and I mean to have it. I've studied the thing for two years; I know every rope, and I know—what I know. . . . The moment this is in the post I leave for London. There's a whole gang to see and square, a hundred things to do. I'm glad of it; I won't trust myself within reach of you till the anchor's weighed. When I christened her again The Pied Witch, I thought of you—you witch to me." . . .

There followed a solemn entreaty to her to be on the path leading to the cove at seven o'clock on Wednesday evening (that is, to-morrow), when he would come ashore and bid her good-bye. It was signed, "Your loving husband, Zachary Pearse." . . .

I lay among the fern a long time; it was so still and peaceful; some sleepy church bells had begun ringing, and seemed calling out a message which I tried to catch but could make nothing of. Already long shadows came stealing out of the sheaves,

wood-pigeons were getting up one by one and flapping away to roost; there was not a living soul to be seen; the sky in the west was faintly streaked with red, all the downs and combe bathed in the last of the sunlight. I got up to go home. Perfect harvest weather; but the stillness was oppressive, like the stillness of suspense. . . .

Life in the farm goes on as if nothing had happened. We have morning and evening prayers. John Ford reads them with a fierce solemnity, as though he were on the eve of an outburst against the God he worships. Morning and evening he visits Pasiance, and sits with her an hour by his watch, comes out wheezing heavily, and goes to his own room; there, I believe, he prays. Since this morning I have not dared to meet him. He is a strong man—but this will break him up. . . .

VII.

KINGSWEAR, *Saturday, August 13th.*

IT'S over—I leave here to-morrow, and go abroad.

A quiet afternoon—up in the churchyard not a breath; merciful that—I like to think of her put gently to sleep. I was there quite half an hour before they came. Some red cows had strayed into an orchard next the churchyard and were rubbing their heads against the railing. While I stood there an old woman came out and drove them away; afterwards she kept stooping and picking up the few apples that had fallen before their time.

"The apples are ripe and ready to fall,
Oh! heigh ho! and ready to fall;
There came an old woman and gathered them all,
Oh! heigh ho! and gathered them all."

Pasiance's song! . . . They brought her very simply—none of the hideous trappings of a funeral—the farm hands carried her, and no one was there but John Ford, the Hopgoods, and that young doctor. They read the service over the grave. The fierce suddenness of John Ford's "Amen!" rings

in my ears now. When it was over he walked away bareheaded in the sunlight, without a word. I went again this evening, and wandered about amongst the tombstones. "Richard Voisey," "John, the son of Richard and Constance Voisey." "Margery Voisey," so many generations of them in that corner; then "Richard Voisey and Agnes his wife," and next to it that new mound on which a sparrow was strutting and the shadows of the apple-trees beginning to hover.

From the first I felt the sense of tragedy coming. I couldn't tell you why, any more than I can tell the inner meaning or significance of what has come to pass. People are always on the look-out for the *meaning*—the inevitable (as they call it) results of certain chains of facts—the inherent fate of people, —as though the very essence of tragedy was not in that sudden, remorseless flame which darts upon us, flares up, and vanishes! The meaning? we may hunt our lives through and never find it; as the chemists say, it's "in solution"! For Pasiance a tragedy must have come sooner or later. Yet there are people like her who live to a good old age, and die peacefully. Everything, says the philosopher, is inevitable—certainly, but is it any good rooting for cut-and-dried purpose? It's like a mole looking for the stars.

I am horribly sad and out of heart; I couldn't write another word, but having told you so much I

must tell you the rest—I can't bear you to think ill of her. . . .

Early on Wednesday afternoon she asked for me.

"Perhaps," she said, "I shall see him—it's only till seven. He'll come at seven; don't you think so? But if I—were to die first—then tell him—I'm sorry. Do you think I ought to send a lot of other messages? . . . Dr Hackett keeps saying, 'Don't talk—don't talk!' Isn't it stupid? Just as if I should have any other chance! I shan't get any more talking after to-night, shall I? I think you are the most understanding person I know—stay here—please!" Her fingers were so soft to touch! It made me ache to see how weak she was.

"You can let anybody in now—I want to see them all. When you're dying you're freer than any other time—nobody wants you to do things, nobody cares what you say. . . . He promised me I should do what I liked all my life—but I don't think I ever believed it really—that makes it funnier! But *now* I can do what I like. . . . I'm going to say all the things I want to, the things you don't say when you're alive, you know, because—because of all sorts of reasons." . . . Then she lay silent; she could not speak them after all—those innermost thoughts that twine round us each in our private darkness, and are too sacred, I suppose, ever to see the light, but melt away when

words come near them. "I'm tired; I don't seem to want to talk any more; it's a pity! . . . Of course I must take the letter and my ring with me; will you see about that? It's the first ring I ever had. Mother hated rings—they're stupid; but this is different. I suppose every woman likes to be married really before they die—won't it be funny, 'wife of Zachary Pearse'?"

I shall remember her like that—with the gleam of a smile in her half-closed eyes, her red lips parted —such a quaint look of mockery, pleasure, regret, on the round, upturned face; the room white, and fresh with flowers, the cool sound of the breeze fluttering the apple-leaves against the window. In the night they had softly unhooked the violin, and taken it away; she didn't seem to miss it. . . . Presently the doctor came back, and with him Dan Treffry. I gave up my place. Pasiance lifted her hand, and Dan laid it gently in his own great paw. He couldn't speak.

"Once I made a rhyme about you," she said, "but you didn't hear, of course. How small my hand looks there—too small altogether." Dan put it softly back on the bed-clothes and wiped his forehead. Pasiance cried in a sharp whisper: "Is it so hot in here? I didn't know;" then with a sort of thrill in her voice, "I'm awfully sorry for all the times I've been a beast." Dan took her hand again, put his lips to it, straightened himself

with a jerk, and left the room. For some time she didn't move, then shook her head amongst the pillows, and whispered, "He's a splendidly good person." The tiny, awestruck whisper, the formal words—I could have broken into tears or laughter.

The afternoon was long, the longest I've ever spent. Sometimes she sank into sleep, sometimes whispered to herself about her mother, her grandfather, the garden, the cats,—all sorts of inconsequent, trivial, even ludicrous memories that seemed thronging in her mind, but never once of Zachary Pearse; only, now and then, she asked the time. . . . Every hour she was visibly weaker. By her bed John Ford sat without moving, sometimes his heavy breathing was the only sound, often she rubbed her fingers against his hand, but never spoke to him: it was a sort of tacit ratification of their lives that could not understand one another. Once he prayed aloud over her in a hoarse voice; and then her pitiful, impatient eyes signed to me.

"Quick," she whispered, "I want *him;* it's all so—cold."

I went out and ran down the path towards the cove.

Leaning on a gate stood Zachary, an hour before his time; it was all like a bad dream, and he a figure in it with the same old blue clothes and leather-peaked cap as on the day I saw him first.

I tried to tell from his face if he had heard. I might have spared myself the trouble. He had heard nothing, absolutely nothing! I can't remember what I said; not a quarter of the truth; yet it flashed across me that he divined the whole —divined, but would not admit, as he never will admit anything he does not like. He kept on saying, "What? What is it? Can't be"— and I had not told him half. "She'll be well in a few days—a sprain—what d'you say? D'you think a sea-voyage . . . Is she well enough to be moved? Moved now?"

It was most curious to see his face, twisted, as it were, with the struggle between his instinct and his resentful vitality; there's no other word for it— twisted. He bit at his fingers; perspiration came on his forehead. He turned round as we walked up the path, and pointed at the sea. A little way out his steamer was slowly moving with thin, blue whiffs of steam. "I'd get her on board in no time. Impossible! What is it, then? Spine? Good God! The doctors . . . Sometimes, you know, they do wonderful things." It was pitiful, yet almost ludicrous, to see his efforts to blind himself to the reality.

"It *can't* be so very bad; she's too young. What do the doctors say? What! Pack of old women! We're walking very slow. Oh! God!"

We came to the gate. I said—

"Pull yourself together. You'll want all your pluck."

"Pluck?" he repeated, "pluck?" like a man stunned.

"She's dying!" I muttered, and it was exactly as if I had hit him on the lower jaw. He seemed to go all to pieces: his knees wobbled; he stared back down the path; for a second I thought he was going to run away. He gave a long sigh, jerked up his head, and went on towards the house. Even then I saw he would not accept it. He waited for me at the door, staring about him in a vague, unhappy way; and I saw he was waiting to be shown her room. It was odd. Her husband! He followed me up the staircase, groping at the wall with his hands. At the top he gripped me by the shoulder.

"It's not true!" he said eagerly. "*I'm* here now. I'll *stay*. Look here, I'll stay. Let everything else go—d'you see? I'll stay."

"Ah!" I said, "pull yourself together! If you loved her, now's the time to show it." He shook all over.

"Yes!" was all he answered. We went into her room. It seemed impossible she was going to die: the colour was all bright in her cheeks, her lips trembling and pouted as if they had just been kissed, her eyes gleaming, her hair so dark and crisp, all her face so young. . . .

Half an hour later I was told she had something to say. She was as still and white as the sheets of her bed. John Ford stood at the foot; and, bowed to the level of the pillows, his head on his clenched fists, sat *Z*achary. It was quiet. All the fluttering of the leaves had ceased; a curious silver light had stolen into the room—the refraction of the branches where the sun had left them; it made everything mysterious. And so we waited what seemed an immense time. Strange! When things have come to a crisis, how little one feels—no fear, no pity, no sorrow, rather the sense, as when a play comes to an end, of hurry and anxiety to get away! Ah! but that very "sense," what a lot it stands for! Her eyes opened, and I could just catch the words—

"*He* was so nice to me! . . . Of course I mind; I only *tried* to be—brave. . . . 'The apples!' *You* know, . . . must sing for—yourself;" then nothing but the smothered gulps of Mrs Hopgood's weeping. John Ford moved. There was a clergyman in the room; and somehow I found myself, with *Z*achary Pearse, outside. We — the strangers — had been sent away; but I knew she had spoken her last words—and spoken them to me! I've wondered—but what's the good of wondering? . . .

*Z*achary touched me on the arm. I was scared by his face. "For God's sake, get me a drink!" he whispered. He drank half a tumbler of whisky

and flung himself on my bed. Nobody came to tell us, but we both knew when she died; at such times sounds and silences have tongues. . . . I have very little else to tell you. I left *Z*achary alone in my room.

It was dark when I came back; he was no longer there. Downstairs I met Dan.

"George," he said, "I'm going; it chokes me here."

We went out, and found ourselves on the path leading to the cove. It was pitch-black; the riding light of the Pied Witch looked no bigger than a firefly. "Waiting for her master!" growled Dan. "When I think of what he's done — it's like — a madness in me." Suddenly from in front we heard the sound of sobbing—a man's sobs; there's no sound so dreadful. We caught hold of each other, and *Z*achary Pearse got up out of the bank not ten paces away. He went on in front out of our sight; but every few seconds the rattling, gasping noise came back. I had a stupid impulse to hurry forward—an instinct, I suppose, to take help. Dan muttered, "Let the poor devil be! let the poor devil be!"

He turned sharp round in his tracks and made off up the hill. I had no heart to go blundering on, and sat down in the hedge. There was something subtly akin to her in all the fresh darkness of the young night: the soft bank, the scent of

honeysuckle, the touch of the ferns and brambles. At that moment her death seemed too cruel and bitter. Presently I heard footsteps, and Zachary passed within a yard. . . . They say he went again to the house, straight to her room. He stood by her side and touched her—stood there making a dumb sound and touching her with his hands. It seems to have been a final revolt of the soft and passionate in him, an appeal to be let off from himself—that hard self—with its power of rebounding from all that hurt it. It hits me more than her death, his strange last struggle to be with her—the desperate, unconscious effort to get away from himself. Death comes to all of us, and when it's over it's over; but this blind business—of one seeking to escape from what he is, seeking to be another being free from the bonds of his own nature—is horrible. Well, he has been made to feel! I seem to understand what he wanted as surely as if he had told me: either to make an end and go to her—either that, or to know he could carry her image away with him and live with it in the suffering that is strength and fidelity. And he could do neither! In those touches of his fingers is the proof of his groping for something nobler, for something outside himself, and the shadow of his inevitable failure. What we are born, that we remain. . . .

I saw him again. It's our fate, apparently, to knock up against each other on the cove path—

the link, so to speak, between Pasiance and the sea, between the two elements of his life — the place where that very evening he was to have met her and said "Good-bye"!

He faced me, even tried to look defiant—a pitiful attempt. I dropped something, and down he went on his knees, feeling about in the dark. He didn't know what he was hunting for, or care whether he found it. It was just to stop his mind working a second. He muttered from the ground, "I can't find it," and rose with his face close to mine. "You've been very good," he said. . . .

Sometimes a beggar will say something that goes to one's heart. Those words of his were like that —all the hardness was broken out of him, only an appeal left. Why is it one can never speak sympathy? . . .

Suddenly he put his hands to his head. "Why don't I kill myself?" he groaned out, and rushed away down the path.

A little later the ship whistled twice; her starboard light gleamed faintly—and that was all. . . .

VIII.

TORQUAY, *Oct. 30th*, 188–.

. . . Do you remember the letters I wrote you from Moor Farm nearly three years ago? Staying here has brought back the memory. . . . To-day I ordered a horse, and set out there on a pilgrimage. I stopped at Brixham for lunch, and, while it was getting ready, walked down to the quay. There's nothing like the old Devonshire quays—for the England of to-day was born behind them. A few rough blocks between the sea and the blood that has crossed the sea, fought the sea, chained her, and suffered her deaths. There had been a shower—but the sun was out again, shining on the sails and on a rampart of slate roofs; smiling over the sea; melting into the land—the land of colour — who wonders at Sir Joshua's tints? Browns, greens, reds, blues, soft and rich, without any end. The secret of Devon colour is that it's not obvious—you can't fathom it; and perhaps it's the secret of the Devon man—you will not get to the end of him. Stamina! not that sort which holds stiff to the breaking point, and perishes,

but holds to a point of bending, bends, and — rebounds. . . .

A trawler had been in collision and was lying against the quay; a spiky-bearded, thin-lipped fellow in a torn blue jersey and sea-boots was superintending repairs; when he saw me looking on, his nose began wrinkling as if he scented a drink.

"Bane in collision, zurr," he said proudly; "like tu zay over 'err?"

He looked a little surprised at my refusal; the collision is doubtless a source of income; suddenly he began screwing up his hard, blue eyes.

"Why," he said, "I remembers yu. Steered yu along o' the young lady in this 'ere zame craft."

I remembered him too, Prawle, the crew of Zachary Pearse's cutter.

"What?" I said, "is that the cutter?"

"Yes," he replied, "that's the cutter—come tu 'err pra-aper bus'ness, zame as all of us; 'tes only matter of time."

"And Captain Pearse?"

He answered with his inscrutable drawl, "That's telling."

"You went with him in the Pied Witch?"

"Ay."

I saw that if I wanted information I must warm him.

"Could you manage a drink for the sake of old times?"

"Well, zurr," he said, "I cude lave my work."

He had two drinks, and remained taciturn. The thought struck me to praise *Z*achary.

He leant his back against the quay, and spat.

"He was a man; there's vlavour tu 'en; I never zane none like 'en."

"Did you do any good?"

Prawle gave me a sharp glance.

"Gude? No, 'twas 'armm we ded, vrom *z*tart to fenish."

He took a sudden lease of speech. He was a creator; he created for me a new *Z*achary Pearse. A man who was never afraid, never beaten; forethoughtful of everything, ready for everything.

Tell me, wasn't it a great thing that he could pull himself together after that awful blow?

While I listened I began to see that the set of circumstances in which I had watched *Z*achary was one thing; the set in which Prawle had watched him quite another. The same man, but what a power of difference! The very same thing which compels the contempt and aversion of our shallow gaze here, commands its wonder and delight there. And the contempt, and delight, they are both shoddy! . . .

"Luck!" he grumbled, "she ran vrom us on a vair wind, but the skipper stuck tu 'err like a ba-arnacle. We 'ad a pa-arcel of trouble. Well! What a man cude du, *'e* ded. *Z*urr, 'e reg'lar

mothered us. When yu caan't du right, zome calls it 'Providence!'—'tes all my eye an' Betty Martin! What I zay es, 'tes these times, there's such a dale o' folk, a dale of puzzivantin' fellers; the world's tu small."

With these words there flashed across me a vision of Drake crushed into our modern life by the shrinkage of the world. Drake in a mesh of red tape, electric wires, parish councils, social life. You know what telegraph wires look like after a hurricane, a tangled mash, inert and prone without a sign of better things. . . . What is it, after all, but Zachary Pearse's drama!—John Ford a hulk; Pasiance dead; Dan a wanderer; the venture wrecked; himself? . . . It looks as if our world were no place for him. Not that he's a Drake—no! and that's not the point. But is it true? Does a type survive its age; live on into times that have no room for it? the blood is there—and sometimes there's a throw-back. . . . All fancy! you say? Perhaps, and perhaps truth—we are only blind.

"So," I said at last, "you failed."

Prawle wriggled.

"Zurr," he replied, "I wudden' goo for tu zay that. Vail! 'tes an ugly word." He was staring at his boots.

"Da-am!" he said at length, "in the end 'twas thru me tu. We were up alone among the haythen on business, and I mus' nades goo for tu break my

leg. The capt'n he wudden' lave me. 'One Devon man,' he says tu me, 'don' lave anotherr,' and that's tru. Well—we werr six days where we shuld ha' bane tu; when we cam' tu the ship a —— cruiser had got 'err for makin' trouble." *Force majeure!* What they call in the insurance policies "the act of God"!

"And what has become of Captain Pearse?"

Prawle answered, "Zurr, I belave 'e went tu China, 'tes onsartain."

I said with sudden suspicion, "He's not dead?"

Prawle looked at me with a kind of uneasy anger.

"Dead! Yu cudden' kell 'en!"

I understood that I had tramped in upon some fetish, some sullen, unacknowledged hero-worship. Perhaps his belief in his skipper's vitality is in some secret way his belief in his own. He repeated—

"Yu cudden' kell 'en! 'Tes tru," he added, "mun'll die zome day. Yu zee they fish; therr's not a one o' they'll give better zport than Capt'n Zach'ry Pearse."

This is a "word"! as the French say. Yes! it's just that: Zachary Pearse is an almost inconceivable mixture of hardness and softness, both in the wrong places, and yet he's undeniable; he will last where others will go under. Try to sympathise with him—you can't! To despise him—you are not able! I can't tell you

why, any more than I can tell why the colour of his native soil is red, his native skies soft, the sea his neighbour.

The vision of him often comes up, with his perfect balance, defiant eyes, sweetish smile; the way the hair of his beard crisps a little, and gets blacker about the cheeks, and the sort of desperate feeling he gives you that you'll never get the better of him, and he'll never get the better of himself. . . .

I took leave of Prawle and half-a-crown. He gave me good day very civilly. Before I was off the quay I heard him say to a lady, "Bane in collision, marm! like tu zay over 'err?"

After lunch I rode on to Moor. The old place looked much the same, except that the apple-trees were stripped, the leaves beginning to go yellow and fall. One of Pasiance's cats passed me in the orchard hunting a bird, still with a ribbon round its neck. John Ford was courteous; he showed me all the latest improvements on the farm, but never by word or sign alluded to the past. I might have been a total stranger. He inquired after Dan in New Zealand, but without much interest; his beard and hair have whitened, but are stubbly as ever; he has grown very stout too, and I noticed sometimes that his walk is not well under control; often he stops to pant and lean on a stick. He was very ill in the winter; they tell

me that sometimes now he will go straight off to sleep in the middle of a sentence.

Before I left I managed to get a few minutes with the Hopgoods. We talked a little of Pasiance, sitting in the kitchen under a row of plates, with that clinging smell of wood-smoke, bacon, and age bringing up memories, as nothing but smells can. The dear old lady's hair, drawn so deprecatingly down her forehead on each side from the centre of her cap, has a few thin silver lines, and her face, I thought, more wrinkles. You can see the tears, too, just behind her eyes when she talks about her "lamb."

Of Zachary I heard nothing, but she told me of old Pearse's death.

"Therr they found 'en, so tu spake, dead—in th' sun; they du say 'e left—well therr—but Haapgood can tell yu;" and Hopgood, ever rolling his pipe, muttered something, and smiled a wooden smile.

He came to see me off from the straw-yard. "'Tis like death to the varrm, zurr," he said, putting all the play of his vast shoulders into the buckling of my girths. "Mister Ford—well! Therr's not one of th' old stock tu take it when 'e's garn. . . . *That* business, it werr cruel; my old woman's never been 'errself since. Tell 'ee what 'tes, don't du t' think tu much."

I went out of my way to pass the churchyard.

There were flowers, quite fresh, chrysanthemums, and asters; above them the white stone scarcely stained—

PASIANCE,

WIFE OF ZACHARY PEARSE.

"*The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away.*"

The red cows were there too; the sky full of great, white clouds, some birds whistling a little mournfully, and in the air the scent of fallen leaves. . . .

THE SALVATION

OF SWITHIN FORSYTE

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I.

SWITHIN FORSYTE lay in bed. The corners of his mouth under a white moustache drooped towards his double chin; he panted—

"My doctor says I'm in a bad way, James."

His brother placed his hand behind an ear. "I can't hear you. They tell me I ought to take a cure. There's always a cure wanted for something. Emily had a cure."

Swithin replied, "Eh? I don't hear you; you mumble so. I hear my man, Adolph. I trained him. . . . *You can't hear me?* You ought to have an ear-trumpet. You're getting very shaky, James."

There was silence; then James Forsyte, as if galvanised, remarked, "I s'pose you've made your will. I s'pose you left your money to the family; you've

nobody else to leave it to. You ought to leave your money to the family. There was Danson died the other day, and he left his money to an 'ospital."

Swithin Forsyte replied, the hairs of his moustache bristling, "I don't hear a word. My fool of a doctor told me to make my will. I hate a fellow who tells you to make your will. My appetite's good; I ate a partridge last night. I'm all the better for eating. He told me to leave off champagne!! I eat a good breakfast." He choked. "I'm not eighty. You must be getting on, James; you're seventy-five if you're a day. You look very shaky."

James Forsyte said, "You ought to have another opinion. Have Blank; he's the first man now. I had him for Emily; cost me two 'undred guineas. He sent her to Homburg; that's the first place now. The Prince was there — everybody goes there."

Swithin Forsyte answered, "I don't get any sleep at night now I can't get out; and I bought a new carriage—gave a pot of money for it. D'you ever have bronchitis? They tell me champagne's dangerous; it's my belief I couldn't take a better thing."

James Forsyte rose.

"You ought to have another opinion. Emily sent her love: she would have come in, but she had to go to Niagara. Everybody goes there; it's

the place now. Rachel goes every morning: she overdoes it—she'll be laid up one of these days. There's a fancy ball there to-night; the Duke gives the prizes."

Swithin Forsyte said angrily, "I can't get things properly cooked here; at the club I get spinach decently done." The bedclothes jerked at the tremor of his legs.

James Forsyte replied, "You must 'a done well with Tintos; you must 'a made a pot o' money. Your ground-rents must be fallin' in, too. You must have a lot o' money you don't know what to do with." He mouthed the words, as if his lips were watering.

Swithin Forsyte glared. "Money!" he said; "my doctor's bill's enormous."

James Forsyte stretched out a cold, damp hand. "Good-bye! You ought to have another opinion. I can't keep the horses waiting: they're a new pair —stood me in three 'underd. You ought to take care of yourself. I shall speak to Blank about you. You ought to have him—everybody says he's the first man. Good-bye!"

Swithin Forsyte continued to stare at the ceiling. He thought, "A poor thing, James! a selfish beggar! Must be worth a couple of 'plums'! A selfish beggar, James!" He wheezed, meditating on life. . . .

He was ill and lonely. For twenty years more

or less he had been ill and lonely; but as he had smoked his first cigar, so he would live his life—stoutly, to its unpleasant end. Every day he was driven to the club; sitting forward on the spring cushions of a single brougham, his hands on his knees, swaying a little and exceedingly solemn. He ascended the steps into a marble expanse; arranged the folds of his chin in the aperture of his collar; walked square, using a stick. Later he would dine, eating slowly and savouring his food, before a bottle of champagne set in an ice-pail—his waistcoat defended by a napkin, his eyes rolling a little or glued in a stare upon the waiter. Never did he suffer his head or back to droop; it was not distinguished.

Because he was old and deaf, he spoke to no one; no one spoke to him. The club gossip, an Irishman, said to each new-comer, "Old Forsyte! Look at 'um! Must ha' had something in his life to sour 'um!" There had been nothing in Swithin Forsyte's life to sour him.

For many days now he had lain in bed in a room that exuded silver, crimson, and electric light, and smelt of opopanax and cigars. The curtains were drawn, the firelight gleamed; on a table by his bed were a jug of barley-water and the 'Times.' He made an attempt to read, failed, and fell again to thinking. His face, with its square chin, looked like a block

of pale leather bedded in the pillow. It was lonely!—a woman in the room would have made all the difference! Why had he never married? He breathed hard, staring frog-like at the ceiling: a memory had come into his mind. It was a long time ago—forty odd years—and seemed like yesterday.

It happened in the year '51, when he was thirty-two, for the only time in his life travelling on the Continent. With his brother James and a man named Traquair he was on his way from Germany to Venice. They found themselves at the Goldene Alp at Salzburg. It was late August — weather for the gods: sunshine on the walls, and the shadow of vine-leaves, and at night moonlight, and again the shadow of vine-leaves. Swithin had refused to visit the Citadel—he was averse to the suggestions of other people; he had therefore spent the day alone in the window of his bedroom, smoking a succession of cigars, and disparaging the appearance of the passers-by. After dinner he was driven by boredom into the streets. His chest puffed out like a pigeon's, and with something of a pigeon's cold, inquiring eye, he strutted along, annoyed at the frequency of uniforms, which seemed to him unnecessary and offensive. His spleen rose at this crowd of foreigners, who spoke an unintelligible language, wore hair on their faces, and smoked bad tobacco. "A queer lot!" he thought.

The sound of music from a café attracted him; he walked in, vaguely moved by an adventurous wish to be distinguished; spurred, too, by an after-dinner demon. The café was the *bier halle* of the 'Fifties, with a door at either end, and lighted by a huge wooden lantern. On a small dais three musicians were stringing out a tune. Solitary men, or groups, sat at some dozen tables, and the waiter hurried to and fro, replenishing glasses from a can; the air was thick with smoke. Swithin sat down. "Wine!" he demanded sternly. The waiter, a little astonished, brought a bottle of wine. Swithin pointed to a beer-glass on the table. "Here!" he said, with the same ferocity. The waiter poured out the wine. "Ah!" thought Swithin, "they can understand if they like." He assumed an air of careless triumph. A group of officers were laughing; Swithin, uneasy and defiant, stared at them. A hollow cough sounded almost in his ear. To his left a man sat reading fiercely, elbows on the corners of a journal—gaunt shoulders raised almost to his eyes. He stopped to drink a dark-coloured liquid from a tumbler, and his gloomy eyes met Swithin's. He had a thin, long nose, broadening suddenly at the nostrils; a black-brown beard, which spread in a savage fan on his chest; what was visible of the face was the colour of old parchment. A strange, haughty, wild creature! Swithin looked at his clothes — they

might have been a musician's or strolling actor's. He was impressed; this was singular, a fellow in such clothes! The man reached out a trembling hand, slightly covered with blackish hairs. "Brandy!" thought Swithin, and buried his nose in his own glass. The crash of a falling chair startled him—his neighbour was on his feet. He was of immense height, and very thin; his great beard seemed to splash away from his mouth; he was glaring at the group of officers and shouting. Swithin made out two words, "*Hunde! Deutsche hunde!*" "Hounds! Dutch hounds!" he thought, "rather strong," and awaited developments. The tall man seized the chair and swung it above his head. There was a pause; one of the officers jumped up and struck at him with a sheathed sword — down came the chair with a thud. All round people had started up. The tall man cried out, "To *me*, Magyars!"

Swithin grinned. The tall man excited his unwilling admiration; he had a moment's impulse to take his side. "Only get a broken nose!" he thought, and looked for a safe corner. But at that moment a thrown lemon struck him on the jaw. He jumped out of his chair and made a rush at the officers. The Hungarian, his soul in his eyes, swung his chair like a flail, and threw him a look—Swithin glowed with admiration of himself. The blade of a sword grazed his arm; he felt a sudden

dislike of the Hungarian. "This is too much," he thought, and, catching up a chair, flung it at the wooden lantern. There was a crash, faces and swords vanished. He struck a match, and by the flame of it bolted for the door. A minute later he found himself in the street.

II.

A VOICE said in English, "God bless you, brother!"

Swithin looked round, and saw the Hungarian holding out his hand. He took it,—and thought, "I've made a fool of myself!" There was something in the Hungarian's gesture which said, "You are worthy of me!" It puzzled him—it was insufferable, but impressive. The man seemed even taller than before; there was a cut on his cheek, the blood from which was streaking his beard. "You English!" he said. "I saw you stone Haynau—I saw you cheer Kossuth. The blood of your people cries out to us." He bent to look at Swithin. "Why! you are not a big man, but you have a big soul—and strong, how you flung them down! Ha!" Swithin had an impulse to take to his heels. "My name," said the Hungarian, "is Boleskey. You are my friend."

"Bulsh-kai-ee, Burlsh-kai-ee," thought Swithin; "what a devil of a name! Mine," he said sulkily, "is Forsyte."

The Hungarian repeated it several times.

"You've got a nasty jab on the cheek," said Swithin; the sight of the matted beard was beginning to make him feel sick. The Hungarian put his fingers to his cheek, brought them away wet, stared at them a minute, then with an indifferent air gathered a wisp of his beard and crammed it up against the cut.

"Ugh!" said Swithin. "Here! Take my handkerchief!"

The Hungarian bowed. "Thank you!" he said; "I couldn't think of it! Thank you a thousand times!"

"Take it!" growled Swithin; it seemed to him suddenly of the first importance, and he thrust the handkerchief into the Hungarian's hand. He felt a pain in his arm. "There!" he thought, "I've strained a muscle."

The Hungarian kept muttering, regardless of passers-by, "Swine! How you threw them over! Two or three cracked heads, anyway—the cowardly swine!"

"Look here!" said Swithin suddenly; "which is my way to the Goldene Alp?"

The Hungarian replied, "But you are coming with me, for a cup of wine?"

Swithin looked at the ground. "Not if I know it!" he thought.

"Ah!" said the Hungarian with dignity; "you do not wish for my friendship—good!"

"Touchy beggar!" thought Swithin. "Of course," he stammered, "if you put it that way——"

The Hungarian bowed, and murmured, "Forgive me!"

They had not gone a dozen steps before a youth, with a beardless face and hollow cheeks, accosted them. "For the love of Christ," he said, "help me!"

"Are you a German?" asked Boleskey.

"Yes," said the youth.

"Then you may rot!"

"Master, look here!" He tore open his coat; there was his skin, and a leather belt drawn tight. Again Swithin felt that desire to take to his heels. He was filled with a horrid foreboding—a sense of perpending intimacy with things no respectable persons had truck with.

The Hungarian crossed himself. "Brother," he said to the youth, "come you in!"

Swithin looked at them out of the corner of his eye, and followed in sullen discomfort. By a dim light they groped their way up some stairs into a large room, where the moonlight came in through a window bulging over the street. A lamp was burning; there was a smell of spirits and tobacco, with a faint scent of dried rose-leaves. In one corner stood a *czymbal*, in another a pile of newspapers. Upon the wall hung some old-fashioned pistols, and

a rosary of yellow beads. Everything was neatly arranged, but dusty. Near an open fireplace was a table with the remains of a meal. The ceiling, floor, walls, were of dark wood. In spite of the strange effect of mingled lights, the room had a sort of refinement. The Hungarian opened a cupboard and took out a bottle; filling glasses, he handed them to his guests. Swithin put his to his nose and furtively watched the others. "Come!" he thought; and tilted it slowly into his mouth. It was thick, too sweet, of a fine flavour.

"Brothers!" said the Hungarian, refilling; "your healths!"

The youth again tossed his off. This time Swithin did the same, and seemed to see the youth in a rosier light. "Poor devil!" he thought—and, with a heart full of generosity, helped the Hungarian to hand him the eatables from the table. "Come round to-morrow!" he said, "I'll give you some shirts." When the youth was gone, however, he remembered with relief that he had given him no address.

"It's better like that," he thought; "I believe he's a humbug."

"What did you say to him?" he asked the Hungarian.

Boleskey answered, "I said—'You have eaten and drunk; now you are my enemy!'"

"Quite right!" murmured Swithin; "a beggar's every man's enemy."

"You do not understand," returned the Hungarian politely. "While he was a beggar—I, too, have had to beg" (Swithin thought, "Good God! this is awful!")—"but now that he is not hungry, what is he but a German? No German dog soils my floors!"

He stood by the lamp, his nostrils, it seemed to Swithin, distending in a most unpleasant fashion; a wholly unnecessary raucousness came into his voice. "I am an exile—all of my blood are exiles. Those godless dogs!" Swithin hurriedly assented.

A face peeped in at the door, that of a young girl. Swithin stared as if he had never seen one before; stealthily he felt his hair, and passed his hand down the front of his waistcoat.

"Rozsi!" said the Hungarian. The girl nodded. She was rather short, with a deliciously round figure and a fair plait of hair. She smiled, showing firm, even teeth; her little, bright, wide-set grey eyes glanced from one to the other. Her face was round, too, rather high in the cheek-bones, the colour of a wild rose, with brows that had a twist at the corners. She put her hand to her cheek and called, "Margit!" An older girl appeared, taller, with fine shoulders, large eyes,

a pretty mouth, and what Swithin described to himself afterwards as a "pudding" nose. Both girls began attending to their father's face, making the while a cooing noise. Swithin turned his back.

"This is what comes of interfering," he thought sulkily; "I might have had my neck broken!" Pinching his injured arm stealthily, he felt himself a martyr. Suddenly a soft palm was placed in his hand, two eyes, half-fascinated, half-shy, looked into his; then a voice called, "Rozsi!" the door was slammed, and he was alone again with the Hungarian. A sense of disturbance remained with him.

"Your daughter's name is Rosy?" he said with heavy jauntiness; "we have it in England—from rose, a flower."

"Rozsi (Rozgi)," repeated the Hungarian; "your English is a hard tongue, harder than French, German, or Czechish, harder than Russian or Roumanian—I do not know any others."

"What?" said Swithin, "you know six languages?" Privately he thought, "He knows how to tell a lie, anyway."

"If you lived in a country like mine," muttered the Hungarian, "with all men's hands against you! A free people—dying—but not dead, not dead!"

Swithin could not think what he was talking about. The face, with its linen bandage, gloomy eyes, great black wisps of beard, the fierce muttering, the hollow cough, all made him horribly uneasy. This man seemed to suffer from some kind of mental dog-bite! His emotion appeared to Swithin indecent, so uncontrolled and open was it; but the sincerity of it awed him. Altogether it was like being forced to look into a furnace. Boleskey stopped roaming up and down. "You think it's over? I tell you, in the breast of each one of us Magyars there is a hell. I ask you, What is sweeter than life? What is more sacred than each breath we draw? Ah! my country!" These words were uttered so slowly, with such an intense mournfulness, that Swithin's jaw relaxed; he cleverly converted the movement into a yawn.

"Tell me," said Boleskey, "what would you do if the French were to conquer you?"

Swithin smiled. "Eh! what's that?" Suddenly, as though something had hurt him, he grunted, "The 'Froggies'? Let 'em try!"

"Drink!" said Boleskey—"there is nothing like it;" he filled up Swithin's glass and his own. "I will tell you my story."

Swithin rose hurriedly. "It's late," he said, and tossed off his glass. "This is good stuff, though; have you got much of it?"

"It is the last bottle," said the Hungarian.

Swithin dropped into his seat. "What?" he snorted; "and you gave it to a beggar?"

"My name is Boleskey-Stefan," suddenly began the Hungarian, raising his head; "of the Komorn Boleskeys." The simplicity of the phrase—as who should say: What need of further description?—made an impression on Swithin; he sat forward in his chair. It was a disappointment when Boleskey resumed, "I am a journalist," and his attention began to wander; it was only a sentence here and there of the story that he caught. "Yet," boomed the deep voice, "there were many abuses—much wrong done—much cowardice. I could see clouds gathering—rolling over our plains. The Austrian wished to strangle the breath of our mouths—to take from us the shadow of our liberty—the shadow—all we had. Three years ago—the year of '48, when every man and boy answered the great voice—Brother, a dog's life!—to use a pen when all of your blood are fighting—but it was decreed for me. My son was killed; my brothers taken—I was thrown out of my country like a dog—I had written out my heart, I had written out all the blood in my body!" He suddenly towered over Swithin, a gaunt shadow of a man, with gloomy, flickering eyes.

The latter got up in a hurry and stammered

some words like, "Much obliged—very interesting." Somewhat to his surprise Boleskey made no attempt to detain him, but stood looking through him at the wall. "Good-night!" said Swithin in an exasperated voice, and stamped heavily downstairs into the street.

III.

When at last Swithin reached the Goldene Alp, he found his brother and friend standing uneasily about the door. Traquair, a prematurely dry man, with whiskers and a Scotch accent, remarked, "Ye're airly!" Swithin growled something unintelligible, and swung up to bed. He discovered a slight cut on his arm. He was in a savage temper—the elements had been conspiring to show him things he did not want to see; yet now and then a memory of Rozsi, the feeling of her soft palm, a sensation of having been flattered, came over him. He woke with the determination to demand his bill. During breakfast his brother and Traquair also announced their intention of moving on. James Forsyte, indeed, remarked that it was no place for a "collector," since all the "old" shops were in the hands of Jews or very grasping persons—though how he had succeeded in discovering this in one day was a mystery. Swithin pushed aside his cup. "*You* may do what you like," he said, "*I'm* staying here."

James Forsyte replied, tumbling over his own words, "Why! what do you want to stay here for? There's nothing for you to do here—there's nothing to see here, unless you go up the Citadel, an' you know you won't go up the Citadel."

Swithin growled, "Who says so?" And having gratified his perversity, felt in a better temper. He had slung his arm in a sash, and accounted for it by saying he had slipped. Later he went out and walked on to the bridge. In the brilliant sunshine spires were glistening against the pearly background of hills; the town had a clean, joyous air. Swithin glanced at the lofty mass of the Citadel and thought, "Looks a strong place! Shouldn't wonder if it's impregnable!" His eye wandered. It occurred to him to go and look for the Hungarian's house, and he strolled through the streets on the far side of the river. About noon, after a hunt of two hours, he was gazing blankly about, and mopping his face, pale with heat, but more obstinate than ever. A voice called, "Mister!" He looked up and saw Rozsi. She was leaning her round chin on her round hand and gazing down with her deep-set, clever eyes. Swithin removed his hat; she clapped her hands. Again he had the sense of being admired and caressed. With a careless air, that sat grotesquely on his square person, he walked to the door; both girls stood in the passage. Swithin had some confused desire to use foreign words. "Ma-

am'selles," he began, "er—bong jour—er, your father—*père, comment?*"

"We also speak English," said the elder girl; "will you come in, please?"

Swithin stared at Rozsi and swallowed a misgiving. The room by daylight had a worn appearance, as if it had always been the nest of tragic or vivid existences. He sat down, awkward and square; his eyes seemed to be saying, "I am a stranger, but don't try to get the best of me—that is impossible." The girls, too, silently looked at him. Rozsi wore a rather short skirt of black stuff, a white shirt, and across her shoulders an embroidered yoke; her sister was dressed in dark green, with a coral necklace; both girls had their hair in plaits. After a minute Rozsi touched the sleeve of his hurt arm.

"It's nothing!" muttered Swithin.

"Father fought with a chair, but you had no chair," she said in a wondering voice.

He doubled the fist of his sound arm and struck a blow at the air. To his amazement she began laughing. Much nettled, he put his hand under the heavy table and lifted it. Rozsi clapped her hands. "Ah! now I see—you are strong!" She made him a curtsey and whisked round to the window. He found her eyes confusing with their vivid intelligence, yet sometimes they seemed to look beyond,

as if he wasn't there—this, too, was confusing. From Margit he learned that they had been two years in England, where their father had made a living by teaching languages; they had been a year in Salzburg.

"We wait," suddenly said Rozsi; and Margit, with a solemn face, repeated, "Yes—we wait."

Swithin's eyes swelled a little with his desire to see what they waited for — how disturbing and inexplicable they were, with their eyes that gazed beyond him! He looked at their figures. "After all," he thought, "they're only girls. She would pay for dressing!" He tried to imagine Rozsi in a flounced skirt, with a thin waist, and her hair drawn down over her ears. She would pay for dressing, with that supple figure, fluffy hair, and little hands! And instantly his own hands, face, and clothes began to disturb him. He got up, walked about, examined the pistols on the wall, and felt a sudden resentment of the faded, dusty room. "Smells like a pot-house!" he thought. As if by accident he sat down again closer to Rozsi, for the first time in his life experiencing that sinking in the chest, that tightening of the tongue-strings, which proceed, the doctors tell us, from agitation of the pericardial nerves. He could find nothing to say.

"Do you not love to dance?" asked Rozsi.

Swithin despised it; the time of a waltz eluded him. He was nimble with his feet, but prone to

eccentric velocities—like a clock-work toy. Rozsi did not wait for his answer.

"To dance is to live. First you hear the music—how your feet itch! It is wonderful! Then you begin slowly, then quick—quicker; you fly—you know nothing — your feet are in the air. It is wonderful!"

"Yes," admitted Swithin, and a slow flush mounted in his face.

"Ah!" continued Rozsi, her eyes fixed on him, "when I am dancing—out there I see the plains—your feet go one—two—three—quick, quick, quick, quicker—till you fly."

It was like a movement—a rush. The blood left Swithin's face. Rozsi stretched herself, a shiver seemed to pass all down her. "Margit! dance—dance!" and, to Swithin's consternation, the two girls — their hands on each other's shoulders—began shuffling their feet and swaying to and fro. "Good God!" he thought, "why, it's as if they were going to hug each other." Their heads were thrown back, their eyes half-closed; suddenly the step quickened, they swung round, flew to one side, then the other, and began whirling in front of him. Instinctively he drew his legs out of the way; the sudden fragrance of rose-leaves enveloped him. Again they flew round; a fixed smile curved his lips. While they were still dancing Boleskey

came into the room. He caught Swithin by both hands.

"Brother, welcome! Ah! you have hurt your arm?" and he drew in his breath with a sympathetic hiss. Swithin felt irritated and ashamed. Boleskey touched him lightly. "I never forget," he said. His yellow face and deep-set eyes expressed a grateful dignity. "Let me introduce to you my friend Baron Kasteliz."

Swithin bowed to a man with a small head and a forehead covered with hair, who, appearing catlike from behind, stood with his gloved hands lightly touching his waist; he conceived a sudden aversion. About Boleskey there was something that made contempt difficult — the sense of comradeship begotten in the fight; the man's height; something lofty and savage about his face; and the instinct that for some obscure reason he must "hedge" his distaste; but Kasteliz, with his neat jaw, low brow, velvety, volcanic look — Swithin nursed his chin, hostility in his gaze. Kasteliz murmured, "Your friends are my friends." He spoke suavely and hissed his s's. Swithin grew red. Suddenly a long, vibrating twang quavered into the room. Rozsi was sitting at the *czymbal;* she looked straight before her, and seemed to see no one: the notes rang under the little hammers in her hands, incessant and metallic, rising and

falling with an undefined melody. Kasteliz had fixed his glowing eyes on her; Boleskey, nodding his head, was staring at the floor; and Margit, with a pale face, stood like a statue.

"What can they see in it?" thought Swithin; "it isn't a tune." He began to fidget, and took up his hat as if he would like to bury his ears. Rozsi saw him and stopped; her lips parted with a faint expression of dismay. His sense of personal injury diminished; he even felt a little sorry, and tried a soft look. She jumped up from her seat and twirled round with a pout. "I must do something," thought Swithin. An inspiration seized him. "Come and dine with me," he said to Boleskey, "to-morrow—the Goldene Alp—bring your friend;" and he repeated, "dine—dinner—bring your friend," as though the Hungarian were ignorant of English. He felt at once in command of the situation, distinguished and avenged, and added, "Little dinner, of course—bottle of wine—bring your friend." He felt the eyes of the whole room on him — the Hungarian's grateful eyes; Margit's wide glance; the narrow, hot gaze of Kasteliz; and last—Rozsi's. A glow of satisfaction ran down his spine. When, however, he emerged into the street he thought gloomily, "Now I've done it!" and not for some paces did he look round; then, with a forced smile, turned and removed his hat to the smiling faces at the window.

Notwithstanding this momentary gloom, he was in an exalted state all the rest of the day, and at dinner kept regarding his brother and Traquair with an enigmatical sneer. "What do they know of life?" he thought; "they might be here a year and get no farther." He made jokes, and pinned the menu-card to the waiter's coat-tails, leered at it, and remarked, "I shall spend three weeks here." His brother, whose large lips were on the point of receiving a plum, looked at him with uneasiness in his light eyes.

IV.

On the day of the dinner Swithin suffered a good deal from the thought, "Am I making a fool of myself? Suppose these fellows are humbugs?" and he reflected gloomily upon Boleskey's clothes. The shortcomings of the dinner-table also oppressed him. He had appointed an early hour—there would be fewer people in the room to see them. When the time approached he shaved till he was glossy, attired himself with splendid neatness, and, though his arm was still painful, discarded the sling; standing before a mirror he endeavoured to fix on his lips the curve of a distinguished carelessness; finally he went downstairs late for the arrival of his guests. . . .

Nearly three hours afterwards they emerged from the Goldene Alp. It was sunset; along the river-bank the houses stood out in a hard line, unsoftened by the touch of dusk; the streets were full of people hurrying to their homes. Swithin and his two companions walked slowly. He had a hazy notion of how the evening had passed; the salient facts in his mind were a number of empty bottles,

the ground before his feet, and the accessibility of all the world. Dim recollections of good things he had said, of his brother and Traquair seated in the background eating an ordinary meal with inquiring, acid visages, caused perpetual smiles to break out on his face, and he steered himself with the stubborn purpose of showing that he was a better man than his guests. In an airy fashion he knew he was going somewhere with a noble object; and Rozsi's face kept dancing up in front of him, like a mellow vision of prosperity, like a promise. He had an undefinable sense of wellbeing; once or twice, however, he took the cigar out of his mouth to give Kasteliz a glassy stare. For Boleskey, on the other hand, he entertained a feeling amounting to warmth, and recalled with admiration the way in which time after time he had set his glass down empty. "I like to see him take his liquor," he thought; "it's a pity the fellow's not a gentleman."

Dusk was falling when they reached a narrow street in the neighbourhood of the Cathedral. For some minutes silence had come over them; Boleskey's eyes glowed as he strode along, savagely inattentive to all around; Kasteliz had become more cat-like than ever. They stopped at a door held open by a woman with a lantern. The change from fresh air to the heat of a corridor, the noise of the door closing behind him, the woman's anxious

glances, sobered Swithin. He asked himself what was coming, and puffed with jaunty uneasiness at his cigar.

"I tell her," said Boleskey, "that I reply for you as for my own son."

Swithin was angry. What business had the fellow to say a thing like that? "Hang his testimonials!" he thought; "what does he know about me? Do I want him to answer for me?" He knew the Hungarian meant well; but a liberty had been taken, his reserve hurt—his delicate inner skin—and, naturally, he resented it.

They passed into a large room, crowded with men and women; Swithin noticed that they all looked at him. He looked at them—they seemed of all classes, some in black coats or silk dresses, others in the clothes of work-people; one man, evidently a cobbler, had on a leather apron, as if he had rushed there straight from his last. Boleskey touched Swithin and began some explanation; hands were extended, people beyond reach bowed. Swithin acknowledged the greetings with a stiff motion of his head; seeing other people dropping into seats, he, too, sat down. Some one whispered his name—Margit and Rozsi were just behind him.

"Welcome!" said Margit; but Swithin was looking at Rozsi—her face was quivering. "What's the excitement?" thought Swithin; "something's

going to begin," and he felt jealous. She blushed, drew in her hands with a quick, tense movement, and gazed out again into the room. "What is it?" thought Swithin; he had a longing to lean back and kiss her lips, and searched angrily for what she was seeing—nothing but a lot of faces turned silently one way.

It was Boleskey who rose and began to speak. Not a single person moved; not a sound could be heard but the tone of his voice. On and on it went, fierce or solemn, and with its rise and fall the faces seemed to stir—fair faces, and dark, even swarthy, faces. Swithin felt uncomfortable at the intense, almost animal feeling—it was not decent. Moreover, in that whole speech he only understood one word—"Magyar"—and this came over and over again; it worried him, a faint sneer became fixed on his lips; sitting with crossed legs he fell into a doze. The twang of a *czymbal* woke him. "What?" he thought, "that infernal thing again!" He could have jumped out of his skin at the touch on his shoulder; Margit was leaning over him, her eyes and cheeks in a flame. "Listen!" she whispered; "Racoczy! forbidden — forbidden!" Swithin saw that Rozsi was no longer in her seat; it was she who was striking the forbidden notes. He looked round—everywhere the same breathless faces, the same entrancement, the same fierce still-

ness. The notes sounded muffled, as if they too were bursting their hearts in silence. Swithin felt a touch of panic; was this a den of tigers? The way these people listened, the ferocity of their stillness, was frightful! . . . He gripped his chair and broke into a slight perspiration; wasn't there a chance to get out of the room. "When it stops," he thought, "there will be a hullabaloo!" But there was only a greater silence, and it flashed through him that any hostile person coming in just then would be torn to pieces. A woman sobbed—it was really unpleasant! Not that he was sorry for the woman, he despised the whole senseless performance; but he felt sore, and made a furtive bolt for the doorway. There was a cry of "Police!" and the whole crowd came pressing after him. Swithin would soon have been out, but a little behind he caught sight of Rozsi swept off her feet. Her frightened eyes angered him. "She doesn't deserve it," he thought sulkily; "letting all this loose!" and shoved his way back to her. She was forced against him, and a fever went stealing through his veins; she clung to him, and he butted forward at the crowd, holding her tight. When they were outside he let her go.

"I was afraid," she said.

"Afraid!" muttered Swithin; "I should think so." No longer touching her, he felt his grievance revive.

"But you are so strong," she murmured.

Swithin growled, "This is no place for you;" and secretly he thought, "Nor for me."

"I'm going to see you home," he said.

"Oh!" cried Rozsi; "but papa and—Margit!"

"That's their look-out!" and away he hurried her.

She slid her hand under his arm; the soft curves of her form brushed him gently, but, oddly, each touch increased his ill-humour. He burned with perverse rage, as if all the passions in him were simmering against his will and ready to boil over; or rather, as if some poison were working its way to the top, through layers of commonplace and sane material. He preserved an obstinate silence, and Rozsi said nothing. When they reached the door of her house she drew her hand away.

"Ah! you are angry!" she said.

"Angry," muttered Swithin; "no! How d'ye make that out?"

"Yes, you are angry," she repeated. He was tortured by desires to kiss her and to swear.

"I wait here for papa and Margit," said Rozsi.

Swithin said nothing, but also waited, leaning against the wall. Once or twice, for his sight was sharp, he saw her steal a look at him, a beseeching look, and hardened his heart with a kind of pleasure. After about five minutes Boleskey, Margit, and Kasteliz appeared. When they saw Rozsi

they broke into exclamations of relief, and Kasteliz, with a glance at Swithin, ran forward and kissed her hand. Rozsi looked at Swithin—a look that said, "Wouldn't — would you like to do that?" He turned short on his heel, and walked away.

V.

All night he hardly slept, suffering from a fever, for the first time in his life. Once he jumped out of bed, lighted a candle, and going to the glass, scrutinised himself long and anxiously. After this he fell asleep, but had frightful dreams. His first thought when he woke was, "My liver's out of order!" and, thrusting his head into cold water, he dressed hastily and went out. He soon left the houses behind. Everything was wringing wet with dew; the whistle of blackbirds under the bushes, the strange, fresh savour in the air, impressed him. He had not been up so early since he was a boy. Why was he walking through a damp wood at this hour of the morning? Something intolerable and unfamiliar must have sent him out. No fellow in his senses would do such a thing! This reflection was irritating. "Who cares what other fellows do?" he thought, and came to a dead stop. After staring at the marks his boots had made in the dew, he began unsteadily to walk back. Regaining the hotel, he went to bed again, and dreamed that in some wild country he was living in a room full

of insects, where a housemaid—Rozsi—holding a broom, looked at him with mournful eyes. There seemed an unexplained need for immediate departure; he begged her to forward his things, and shake them out carefully before she put them into the trunk. He understood that the charge for sending would be twenty-two shillings, thought it a great deal, and had the horrors of indecision. "No," he muttered, "pack, and take them myself." The housemaid turned suddenly into a lean creature. He woke with a sore feeling about his heart.

When he perceived his wet boots he felt unsafe. It seemed altogether a scaring business, something like catching sight of himself in the combination of a tall hat and tailless coat!—frightful! Jumping up, he began to shovel his things into his trunks. It was twelve o'clock before he descended, and found his brother and Traquair still at the table arranging an itinerary; he surprised them by saying that he too was coming, and without further explanation set to work to eat. James Forsyte had heard there were salt-mines in the neighbourhood—his proposal was to start, and halt an hour on their road to inspect them; he said, "Everybody 'll ask you if you've seen the salt-mines; I shouldn't like to say I hadn't seen the salt-mines. They'd say, What's the good of your going there if you haven't seen the salt-mines?" He wondered, too, if they

need tip the second waiter. "An idle chap!" he pronounced.

A discussion ensued. Swithin ate on, glumly conscious that his mind was set on bigger things, he said, "D—n the second waiter!" Suddenly on the other side of the street Rozsi and her sister passed, with little baskets on their arms. He started up, and at that moment Rozsi looked round —her face was the incarnation of impudent enticement, the chin tilted, the lower lip a little thrust forward, her round neck curving back across her shoulder. Swithin muttered, "Make your own arrangements—leave me out!" and hurried from the room, leaving James Forsyte beside himself with interest and alarm.

When he reached the street, the girls had disappeared. He hailed a carriage. "Drive!" he called to the man, with a circular flourish of his stick, and as soon as the wheels had begun to clatter over the stones he leant back, looking sharply about him. He soon had to give up the thought of finding them, but made the coachman turn round again and again. All day he drove about, far into the country, and kept urging the driver to greater speed, once even poking him in the back with his stick. He was in a strange state of hurry and elation, and wore a pompous and solemn air. He dined at a little country hotel; and this, indeed, gave

the measure of his disturbance—the dinner was abominable.

On returning late in the evening he found a note from Traquair. "Are you in your senses, man?" it asked; "we have no more time to waste idling about here. If you want to rejoin us, come on to Danielli's Hotel, Venice." Swithin chuckled when he read it, and feeling somehow frightfully tired, went to bed and slept like a log.

VI.

THREE weeks later he was still in Salzburg, no longer at the Goldene Alp, but in rooms over a shop near the Boleskeys'. He spent a small fortune in buying flowers. Margit would croon over them, but Rozsi, with a sober *Danke schön!* as if they were her right, would look long at herself in the glass, and pin one into her hair. Swithin ceased to wonder at this; he ceased to wonder at anything they did. One evening he found Boleskey deep in conversation with a dishevelled man of pale appearance.

"Our friend Mr Forsyte—Count D——," said Boleskey.

Swithin bowed, with a faint, unavoidable emotion, and thought, looking at the Count's trousers, "Doesn't look much like one!" He turned to talk to the girls, but they were silent, as if under a spell. With an ironical grin, he took his hat. When he reached the bottom of the dark stairs he heard footsteps above. Rozsi came running down, looked out at the door, and put her hands to her breast as if disappointed; suddenly with

one of her quick glances she saw him. Swithin caught her arm. Round she whisked, and her face seemed to bubble with defiance or laughter; she ran up three steps, stopped, looked at him over her shoulder, and fled on up the stairs. Swithin went out bewildered and annoyed.

"What was she going to say to me?" he kept thinking. During these three weeks he asked himself all sorts of questions: whether he was being made a fool of; whether she was in love with him; what he was doing there; and sometimes at night, with all his candles burning as if he wanted light thrown on the subject, the breeze coming in at the window, a half-smoked cigar in his hand, he sat for an hour or more staring at the wall. "Enough of this!" he thought regularly every morning. Twice he packed fully—once ordered his travelling carriage, but countermanded it the next day. What definitely he hoped, intended, resolved, he could not have said. He was always thinking of Rozsi, and she remained a riddle; sufficiently plain, however, were her surroundings—like so many menaces to the fetishes of his existence. And Boleskey! Whenever he looked at Boleskey he thought, "Why can't he keep himself clean?" and mechanically fingered his own well-tied and spotless cravatte. To talk with the fellow was like being forced to look at things which had no business in the light of day. Freedom, equality, country, self-sacrifice!

"Why doesn't he go and *do* something," he thought, "instead of all this palaver." Boleskey's sudden diffidences, self-depreciation, fits of despair, irritated him. "Morbid beggar!" he would mutter; "thank God *I* haven't got a thin skin." And proud too!—"So extraordinary," Swithin thought, "an impecunious chap like that!" One evening, moreover, Boleskey returned home drunk. Under pretext of showing him a pistol, Swithin hustled him away into his bedroom, helped him to undress, and stayed until he was asleep. "Too much of a good thing!" he thought, "before his own daughters, too!" It was after this that he ordered his travelling carriage. The other occasion on which he packed for departure was an evening after dining with them, when not only Boleskey, but Rozsi herself had picked chicken bones with her fingers.

Often in the mornings he would go to the Mirabel Garden to smoke an after-breakfast cigar; there, with crossed legs, in stolid contemplation of the statues,—rows of half-heroic men carrying off semi-distressed females,—he would spend an hour or so pleasantly, his hat tilted to keep the sun off his nose. The day after the encounter with Rozsi at the foot of the stairs he came there as usual. It was a morning of blue sky and sunshine, with a sober glow on the old, prim garden, its yew-trees, its serio-comic statues, its walls covered with plums and apricots. When Swithin approached his usual

seat he found Rozsi sitting there. Removing his hat, he stammered—

"Good morning; did you know this was my seat?"

Rozsi looked on the ground. "Yes," she answered.

Swithin felt bewildered. "Do you know," he said in a sulky voice, "you treat me very funnily?"

To his consternation Rozsi bent down, pressed her lips to his hand, and, without a word, sprang up and rushed away. It took him a minute to recover himself. There were a good many people about; he did not like to run, but came up with her on the bridge, and slipped her hand under his arm.

"You shouldn't have done that," he said; "you shouldn't have run away from me, you know."

Rozsi laughed. Swithin withdrew his arm, and a desire to shake her seized him. He walked the length of the bridge before he answered, very pale, with angry eyes, "Will you have the goodness to tell me what you came to that seat for?"

Rozsi flashed a look at him. "To-morrow is the *fête*," she said.

Swithin muttered, "Is that all?"

"If you do not take us, we cannot go."

"Suppose I refuse," he said sullenly, "there are plenty of others."

Rozsi bent her head, and scurried along. "No,"

she murmured, "if *you* do not go — I do not wish."

Swithin drew her hand back within his arm. How round and soft it was! He gave it a squeeze. "That's all right," he said, and tried to look in her face. When she was nearly home he said good-bye, not wishing, for some obscure reason, to be seen with her. He watched till she disappeared; then slowly, tapping his stick against the toes of his boots, retraced his steps to the Mirrabel Garden: when he came to where they had sat, he slowly lighted his cigar, and for a long time after it was smoked out remained there in the silent company of the statues.

VII.

A CROWD of people wandered among the booths, and Swithin found himself obliged to give an arm to each of the girls. "Like a little Cockney clerk!" he thought, but his indignation was unnoticed by his companions; they talked, they laughed; every sight and sound in all the hurly-burly seemed to go straight to their hearts. He eyed them ironically—with their eager voices, and little coos of sympathy, they appeared to him mysterious and vulgar. In the thick of the crowd he slipped his arm out of Margit's as if by accident, but, just when he thought himself free, felt the unwelcome hand slide up again. He made one or two more attempts, but each time Margit reappeared, serene, full of good-humour; and his failure suddenly appearing to him in a comic light, he thought her remarkably smart. When Rozsi leaned across him, the glow of her round cheek, the curve of her lip, the inscrutable gleam of her little eyes, sent a thrill of longing through him, and a sort of despair. Stealthily he inhaled her, and began to make jocose remarks upon the crowd.

He was obliged to stand by while they parleyed with an old gipsy, whose matted locks and skinny hands inspired him with disgust. "What folly!" he thought, when Rozsi held out her palm. The old woman mumbled, and shot at Swithin a look of malignant cunning. Rozsi drew her hand back and crossed herself. "What folly!" thought Swithin again; and seizing the girls' arms hurried them away. Rozsi was pale, and kept her eyes on the ground.

"What did the old hag tell you?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"You don't mean to say you believe?"

Her eyes were full of tears. "The gipsies are wise," she murmured.

"Come," he persisted, "what did she tell you?"

This time Rozsi looked hurriedly round, and slipped from his side into the crowd. After a hunt they found her again, and Swithin, who was scared, growled, "You shouldn't do such things —it's not respectable."

Upon higher ground, in the centre of a clear space, a military band was playing. For the privilege of entering this charmed circle Swithin paid three *krone*, and chose the best seats—from the unconscious habit of getting value for his money. He ordered champagne, and watched Rozsi out of the corner of his eye as he poured it

out. The protecting tenderness of the day before was all lost in this medley. "Every man for himself!" he thought, and, leaning back, eyed her with a kind of cold fervour. The colour deepened again in her cheeks, she laughed, kept giving little pats to her dress, and pouting her lips. Suddenly she put her glass aside. "Thank you, very much," she said; "it is enough!"

Margit, her pretty mouth all smiles, cried, "*Lieber Gott!* is it not good—life?" It was not a question that Swithin could answer. The band began playing a waltz. "Now they will dance. *Lieber Gott!* and are the lights not wonderful?" Lamps were flickering under the trees like a swarm of bright insects. Voices, laughter, the moan of hurdy-gurdys, the creak of merry-go-rounds, made a hum as from a gigantic hive. People passing below lifted their faces, then vanished again in the crowd; Rozsi, her back to the table, stood gazing at them spellbound, as if their going and coming were a delicious mystery.

The space was soon full of couples whirling round the band. Rozsi's head began to beat time. "See!" she whispered, "they are dancing. Oh! Margit!"

Swithin furtively avoided her eyes and finished the champagne; his face was solemn and uneasy. A man approached, raised his hat, and offered his arm to Margit. Swithin started up, but already

Margit had taken the arm. She looked back over her shoulder to reassure him: "It is a friend!"

Swithin glared at Rozsi, but said nothing—her eyes were too bright, her lips too tremulous. He slipped his hand along the table and touched her fingers. Then she darted a look at him—appeal, reproach, tenderness, aversion, all were expressed in it. Was she expecting him to dance? did she want to mix with this riff-raff; wish *him* to make an exhibition in this hurly-burly? he felt quite sorry for himself. A voice said, "Good evening!" and before them stood Kasteliz, in a dark coat tightly buttoned in at the waist, with gloves on his hands.

"You are not dancing, *Rozsi Kozsanony?*" (Miss Rozsi.) "Let me, then, have the pleasure." He held out his arm, and Rozsi took it. Swithin stared straight in front of him. In the very act of going Rozsi slipped her hand back, and gave him a look that said as plainly as words: "Will you not?" For answer he fixed his eyes on his boots —when he looked up she was gone. He paid the score and made his way into the crowd. But as he was going she danced by close to him, all flushed and panting. She hung back as if she would stop, and he caught the gleam of tears in her eyes. With an abrupt movement he lost sight of her again; his own eyes had taken a glassy stare. To be deserted the very first minute he was alone with

her, and for that jackanapes with the small head and volcanic glances! It was too much! Suddenly it occurred to him that she was alone with Kasteliz — alone at night, far from home. "Well," he thought, "let her—what do I care?" and went on shouldering his way through the crowd. This served him right for mixing with people below him—it never paid! He left the fair, but the further he went the more he nursed his anger, the more heinous seemed her offence, the sharper grew his jealousy. "A beggarly baron!" he thought.

A figure came alongside—it was Boleskey. One look showed Swithin that he was drunk. "That's the last straw!" he thought.

Unfortunately Boleskey had recognised him. He appeared in a state of great excitement. "Where? —where are my daughters?" he began.

Swithin brushed past. Boleskey caught hold of his arm. "Listen — brother!" he said with a hiccough; "news of my country! Look here!— after to-morrow——"

"Keep it to yourself!" growled Swithin, wrenching his arm free. He went straight to his lodgings, and, lying on the hard sofa of his unlighted sitting-room, gave himself up to bitter thoughts. In the midst of his anger, her image, with its supple movements, pouting lips, and clever eyes, would rise and haunt him.

VIII.

The next morning there were no carriages to be had, and Swithin was compelled to put off his departure till the morrow. The day was grey and misty; he wandered about with a lost dog's strained, inquiring look in his eyes; but his walk was, if possible, a thought squarer and more pompous than usual.

Late in the afternoon he returned to his lodgings. In a corner of the sitting-room stood Rozsi. He had no intention of showing the thrill of triumph, the sense of appeasement, the chaos of emotions, that seized on him, but they crept through in a faint grin. Rozsi made no sound, nor did she take her hands from before her face. It was a silence significant of obscure, burning changes—it weighed on Swithin, as indecent as if it stood for naked emotion, and with a sort of awful solidity that meant—God knew what! He was being bullied into a demonstration. It was beastly! His forehead grew damp. What was behind her hands? Very unfair!—his own face was visible. Why didn't she speak? He felt like a child in the dark;

at any moment a monster might jump out. Not to be able to speak! He didn't remember it ever happening before. Why was she here? Alone, too? That wasn't the right sort of thing—was it? He stood with his mouth a little open, in a kind of paralysis.

Rozsi dropped her hands; her flushed face was quivering—a word or sign might bring a burst of tears; he noticed for the first time a little mole on her chin. His terror passed into unspeakable discomfort—it was like wanting to use a handkerchief when you had none.

He walked to the window. "Give her time!" he thought; but the moment he averted his eyes he was seized again by the unreasoning terror of this silence; spinning round, he caught her by the hands. "For goodness' sake," he said, "let's talk!"

Rozsi buried her face on his shoulder. In the breathless silence his head began to go round. . . .

Half an hour later Swithin paced up and down his room with uneven strides. The scent of rose-leaves had not yet died away. A glove lay on the floor; he picked it up, and for a long time stood weighing it in his hand. All sorts of confused thoughts and feelings haunted him, and suddenly he realised that she had surrendered, offered him her whole self. In those few minutes anything *might* have come to pass—anything; he had realised it too late. A sense of waste and loneliness burned him. He

threw the glove away. "I'm glad," he muttered, "it wouldn't have been the thing," and gloomily stared at his effigy in the glass. He felt as if some one had played him a trick. "How could I be expected to know?" he brooded. How *could* he be expected to know the abnegation of simple, fiery emotion? It was unfortunate.

Presently he had another visitor, Kasteliz.

"What can I do for you?" Swithin asked ironically.

Kasteliz, who seemed suffering from excitement, began speaking at once very fast, in very bad English. Why had he left his charges the night before? What excuse had he to put forward? What sort of conduct did he call this?

Swithin, with his head thrust forward, bull-dog fashion, and a forced smile, answered, "What business is that of yours?"

The business of a gentleman! What right had the Englishman to pursue a young girl?

"Pursue?" said Swithin; "you've been spying, I suppose?"

"Spying — I — Kasteliz — Maurus Johann — an insult!"

"Insult!" sneered Swithin; "d'you mean to tell me you weren't in the street just now?"

Kasteliz answered with a hiss, "If you do not leave the city I will make you, with my sword—do you understand?"

"And if you do not leave my room I will throw you out of the window!"

For some minutes Kasteliz could only speak his own language; Swithin waited, still with a forced smile and a fixed look in his eyes. Fortunately he did not perceive that the other was wringing the changes upon the word "cad," which was like a "red rag" to him.

"If you are in the city to-morrow evening," said Kasteliz at last, with his hands on his waist, "I will spit you in the street."

Swithin turned to the window and contemplated his visitor's retiring back with a queer mixture of amusement, stubbornness, and anxiety. "Well," he thought, "I suppose he'll run me through!" and grinned. It appeared to him an unpleasant contingency, and he thought of it frequently, but it served if anything to harden his determination. His head was busy with plans for seeing Rozsi; his blood on fire with the kiss she had given him.

IX.

SWITHIN passed the next morning in bed, with the perverseness peculiar to him. "I won't be put out of my way," he thought. When at last he got up he had a dry mouth, and felt "as nervous as a cat." He had made up his mind not to go to Rozsi till five o'clock. "I mustn't make myself too cheap," he reflected. It was a little past that hour when he at length sallied forth, and with a beating heart walked towards the Boleskeys'. He looked up at the window, more than half expecting to see Rozsi watching for him; but she was not there, and he noticed with faint surprise that the window was shut; the plants outside, too, looked singularly arid and dusty. He knocked, but no one came. He knocked again, and waited, rather pale; still no one came. He beat a frenzied tattoo on the door, and his heart grew cold. "There must be some one in the infernal place," he thought. "I'll get in, if I have to knock all night." At last the door was opened by a man with a reddish-grey beard, and one of those sardonic, disillusioned faces that

are only to be seen on shoemakers of German extraction.

"What do you want, making all this noise?" he asked in German.

Swithin pointed up the stairs. The man, preparing to shut the door, grinned, and shook his head.

"I want to go up," said Swithin.

The cobbler dropped his hands to signify that it was absolutely immaterial to him, and Swithin rushed upstairs. The rooms were deserted. The furniture remained, but all signs of life were gone. One of his own bouquets, faded, stood in a glass on the table; the ashes of a fire in the grate were barely cold, and little scraps of burnt paper strewed the hearth; already the room smelt musty. He rushed into the bedrooms. With a feeling of stupefaction he stood staring at the girls' beds, side by side against the wall. A bit of ribbon on the floor caught his eye; he picked it up and crammed it mechanically into his pocket—it was a piece of evidence that she had existed. By the mirror some pins were dropped about; a little powder had been spilled. He looked at his own disquiet visage and thought, "I've been cheated!"

The shoemaker's voice aroused him. "*Tausend teufel! Eilen Sie, nur! Zeit ist Geld! Ich kann*

nicht länger warten!" (Time is money! I can't wait any longer!) Slowly he descended. The shoemaker still held the door in his hand, his shoulders raised, his eyelids drooping.

"Where've they gone?" asked Swithin painfully. "A pound for every English word you speak. Come! A pound!" and he made an O with his fingers.

The corners of the shoemaker's lips curled. "*Geld! Mff! Eilen Sie, nur!*" (Hurry up!)

But in Swithin a sullen anger had begun to burn. "If you don't tell me," he said, "it'll be the worse for you."

"*Sie sind ein komische Kerl!*" (You are a funny fellow!) remarked the shoemaker. "*Hier ist meine Frau!*"

A battered-looking woman came hurrying down the passage, calling out in German, "Don't let the gentleman go!"

With a sound like a snarl the shoemaker turned his back and shambled off.

Furtively the woman thrust a note into Swithin's hand, and furtively she waited for him to pay her.

The note was from Rozsi.

"Forgive me," it ran, "that I leave you and do not say good-bye. To-day our father had the call from our dear Father-town so long awaited. In

two hours we are ready. I pray to the Virgin to keep you ever safe, and that you do not forget me.—Your unforgetting good friend, ROZSI."

When Swithin read it his first sensation was such as a man in a bog might feel, receiving a shove that sinks him deeper; then his obstinacy stiffened. "I won't be done," he thought. Taking out a sovereign, he tried to make the woman comprehend that she could earn it. He got her to write the words on a leaf of his pocket-book, and, clutching it tight, gave her the sovereign. Then he made off to the Goldene Alp, where there was a waiter who spoke English. The translation given him was this:—

"At three hours they start in a carriage on the road to Linz—they have bad horses—the Herr also rides a white horse."

Swithin at once hailed a carriage and started at full gallop on the road to Linz. Outside the Mirrabel Garden he caught sight of Kasteliz and grinned at him. With intimate satisfaction he thought, "I've sold *him* anyway; for all their talk, they're no good, these fellows!"

His spirits rose, but soon fell again in a gloom of misgivings. What chance had he of catching them? They had three hours' start! Still, the roads were heavy from the rain of the last two nights—they had bad horses, luggage; his own horses were good,

his driver bribed—he might overtake them by ten o'clock! But did he want to? What a fool he had been not to bring his luggage; he would then have had a respectable position. What a brute he would look without a change of shirt, or anything to shave with! He saw himself with horror, all bristly, and in soiled linen. A pretty kind of lunatic people would think him. "Why!" flashed across him, "I've given myself away nicely; what the dickens can I say to them?" and he smoked in sullen anguish, staring at the driver's back. He read Rozsi's letter again; it was so like an appeal, and it had a scent of her. In the growing darkness, jolted by the swing of the carriage, he sat, impassive and sulky, suffering tortures from prudence, but obstinate as a mule.

It grew colder and dark. He turned the collar of his coat up to his ears. He had cruel visions of Piccadilly. This wild-goose chase appeared an unsafe, unfathomable business. Lights, fellowship, security! "Never again!" he brooded; "why won't they let me alone?" It was not clear whom he meant by "they"—the conventions, the Boleskeys, his passions, or those haunting memories of Rozsi that were like an appeal to his generosity. "If I'd only got a bag with me!" he sighed. Surely nothing could be less fair than the treatment he was receiving; nothing less explicable than his own conduct. "What am I going to get by it?"

he asked, but got no answer. The darkness itself became less obscure than his own sensations. From time to time he took out his watch. At each village the driver made inquiries. It was past ten when he stopped the carriage with a jerk. The stars were bright as steel, and by the side of the road a reedy lake showed milky-white in the moonlight. Swithin shivered. A man on a horse awaited them in the centre of the road. "Drive on!" called out Swithin, uneasy, but with a stolid face. It turned out to be only Boleskey, who, upon a gaunt white horse, looked eccentric, like a creature with many wings. He had taken up a position as if to bar the progress of the carriage, and held a pistol in his hand.

"Theatrical beggar!" thought Swithin, with a nervous smile. It was just as if some one had asked him, "What are your intentions?" He made no sign of recognition. Slowly Boleskey brought his lean horse up to the side of the carriage. When he saw who was within he manifested astonishment and delight.

"You?" he exclaimed, slapping his hand on his attenuated thigh, and leaning over till his beard almost touched Swithin. "You have come? You followed us?"

"It seems so," Swithin grunted unhappily.

"You throw in your lot with us. Is it possible? You—you are a knight-errant!"

"Good God!" muttered Swithin. Boleskey, flogging his dejected steed, cantered ahead in the moonlight. He came back, bringing an old cloak, which he insisted on wrapping round Swithin's shoulders. He handed him, too, a capacious leather flask.

"How cold you look!" he murmured as Swithin drank; and his burning, grateful eyes watched him as a cat watches a mouse. They had come up to the heels of the other carriage, but Swithin, hunched in the cloak, made no attempt to see what was in front of him, and to the bottom of his soul resented the Hungarian's gratitude. He remarked at last, with wasted irony—

"You're in a hurry, it seems!"

"If we had wings," answered Boleskey, "we would use them."

"Wings!" muttered Swithin thickly; "legs are good enough for me."

X.

Arrived at the inn where they were to pass the night, Swithin waited, hoping to get into the house without a "scene"; but when at last he alighted, the girls were still in the doorway, and Margit greeted him with an admiring murmur, in which he seemed to detect a whole world of irony. As for Rozsi, pale and tremulous, with a half-scared look, she gave him her hand, and, quickly withdrawing it, shrank behind her sister. When they had gone to their room Swithin sought out Boleskey. His spirits had risen remarkably. "Tell the landlord to get us supper," he said; "your daughters, too—we'll crack a bottle to our luck," and his sardonic smile suggested invulnerability to the freaks of fortune. Keeping close to the heels of the landlord he hustled the preparations. When they were finished he stood at the window: it faced a wood, so near that he could almost touch the trees. With the scent of pines blowing in on him he brooded, and deep down in himself was conscious of something it would be fatal to look into. He turned and began to

draw the corks of the wine-bottles. The sound seemed to conjure up Boleskey, who came in splashed all over and exhaling a slight odour of stables; soon after Margit appeared, fresh and serene, but no Rozsi. "Come!" said Swithin, looking suspiciously at the floor as if he expected that she might arrive through a trap-door, "where is your sister?" Margit answered that Rozsi was tired. "Nonsense!" he replied roughly; "it will do her good to eat." Boleskey, murmuring, "She must drink to our country," went out to summon her, and Margit followed; Swithin, with savage concentration, cut up a chicken. They came back without her. Boleskey, fixing his fine eyes upon the wine-bottles, whispered that it would be better to leave her alone. "She has a megrim of the spirit."

Swithin's face fell. "Look here!" he said, "I'll go and try. Don't wait for me."

"Yes," answered Boleskey, sinking dejectedly into a chair; "try, brother, try—by all means."

Swithin walked down the corridor with an assured face, but an odd, sweet, sinking sensation in his chest; and with an assured face he tapped on Rozsi's door. Soon she peeped forth, with hair all loose and wondering eyes.

"Rozsi," he stammered, "what makes you afraid of me?"

She stared at him without answering.

"Why won't you come?"

Still she did not speak, but suddenly stretched out to him her bare arm. Swithin pressed his face to it. With a shiver she whispered above him, "I will come," and gently shut the door.

Swithin retraced his steps stealthily, as if he had something to hide, and paused a minute outside the sitting-room to gain control of himself.

The bare board floor, the stuffy stove, the look of the food, and of Boleskey with his hand on a bottle, steadied him at once.

"She is coming!" he said arrogantly. In a minute or two she came, her hair roughly twisted in a plait.

Swithin sat on one side of the table, a girl on either hand. He was really hungry. Boleskey seemed plunged in gloom; Margit alone talked.

"You will come to our Father-town? We shall have things to show you. Rozsi, what things we will show him!" And Rozsi, with a joyful movement of the hands, repeated, "What things we will show you!"

With glowing cheeks, mouths full, and eyes as bright as squirrels', they chattered reminiscences of the "dear Father-town," of "dear friends," of the "dear home."

"A poor place!" Swithin could not help thinking. The enthusiasm seemed to him undistinguished; but he was careful to assume an expres-

sion of interest, and fed stealthily on the glances flashed at him from Rozsi's restless eyes.

Boleskey suddenly burst into a surprising speech.

"Let us not forget," he said, "that we go perhaps to ruin, to death; in the face of all this we go, because our country needs—in this there is no credit, neither to me nor to you, my daughters; but for this noble Englishman, what shall we say? Give thanks to God for a great heart. He comes—not for country, not for fame, not for money, but to help the weak and the oppressed. Let us drink, then, to him; let us drink again and again to heroic Forsyte!" and in the midst of the dead silence, Swithin, blushing a dull red, was pierced to the very soul by the look of suppliant yet mocking surrender in Rozsi's eyes. Sharply he glanced at Boleskey to see if he were laughing at him; but the Hungarian, after drinking up his wine, had sunk again into his seat; and there suddenly, to the surprise of all, he began snoring. Margit, who had been watching with glances capable and tolerant as a mother's, said, "It is the ride — he is tired!" Prudently pocketing a large red apple, she went round and woke him up. He instantly muttered something about "horses," and leaning on her shoulder staggered out of the room. Swithin and Rozsi were left alone. Her fingers were busy rolling pellets of

bread; he slid his hand towards them, upsetting his glass. He felt he must stop her fingers. They ceased before he reached them, and seemed to await his touch. Something gave way in him, and words came welling up from his heart; for the moment he forgot himself, forgot everything but that he was near her. Her head dropped on his shoulder, he breathed the scent of her hair; then she slipped away with brilliant eyes. "Good night!" she whispered, and the whisper was like a kiss; before he could stop her she was gone. Her footsteps in the passage died away, but Swithin sat gazing intently at a single drop of the spilt wine quivering on the edge of the table. In that moment she, in her helplessness and emotion, was near to him—his life remote; all the real things—his conventions, convictions, training, himself—all seemed remote, behind a mist of passion and strange chivalry. Carefully with a bit of bread he soaked up the drop; suddenly he thought, "This is tremendous!" and for a long time stood in the window smoking, as if he were trying to understand himself.

XI.

In the early morning he woke, full of the discomfort of a strange place and a medley of dreams. Lying there, with his nose peeping over the quilt, he was visited by a horrible suspicion. When he could bear it no longer he started up in bed. What if it were all a plot to get him to marry her? The thought was treacherous to her, and inspired in him a faint disgust. Still, *she* might be ignorant of it! But was she so innocent? What innocent girl would have come to his room? What innocent girl? His admirable conventionality asked the question. In the prudent hurry to secure his own safety, thoughts like this began to appear justifiable and by no means base. Her father, who pretended to care only for his country? It was inconceivable that any man should be such a fool; it was all part of the game — scheming rascal! Kasteliz, too, and his threats! They meant him to marry her! And the horrid idea was strengthened by his own middle-class reverence for marriage—he knew by instinct that it was respectable; he was used to it; moreover, he was afraid of the other

way—too primitive! "Must marry her," he thought mechanically; "anything else would be a shame!" Suddenly he thought of that marriage! Good Heavens! this was awful! With the fatal, cold clearness of the morning light he saw his own situation in its full bearings for the first time, and, like a fish out of water, gasped; but, slowly, a sullen resentment against this attempt to force him settled deep in his soul. He plunged at his clothes. No man could stay in bed to be gnawed by these fiendish suspicions! He felt again that odd sinking at his heart. In the next room she was asleep!

He reseated himself on the bed, holding his head between his hands, and solemnly set to thinking what such a marriage meant. In the first place it meant ridicule, in the second place ridicule, in the third place ridicule. She would eat chicken bones with her fingers—those fingers his lips were burning to kiss. She would dance wildly in other men's arms. She would talk of her "dear Father-town," and all the time her eyes would look beyond him, somewhere or other into some d—d place he knew nothing of. He sprang up and paced the room, and for a moment thought he would go mad.

They meant him to marry her! Even she—she meant him to marry her! The tantalising inscrutability of her face; the sudden little tendernesses; the quick laughter; the one swift burning kiss; even the movements of her hands; the tears in

her eyes,—all were evidence against her. Not one of the things that Nature made her do counted on her side, but how they fanned his longing, his desire, and his distress! He went to the glass and tried to part his hair with his fingers; but being rather thin, it only made unsatisfactory streaks on the top of his head. He felt there was no comfort to be got out of this. He drew his muddy boots on. Suddenly he thought, "Now, if I could see her alone, I could arrive at some understanding!" He clung like a lost man to this idea, and failed to see the humour that would lie in making her the alternative proposals—marriage or otherwise.

When at last he was dressed, he instinctively set his back against a wall, and, with a sense of stupefaction, made the astounding discovery that no "understanding" was possible. He seized his hat, and, like a rabbit that has been fired at, bolted from the room. Amongst the damp woods he plodded along with his head down, resentment and dismay eating into his vitals. Presently, as the sun rose, and the air grew sweet with pine scent, he gradually regained the cock-sure temper of his mind. The great thing, after all, was to *do* something. And the tramp of his own footsteps lulled him into the feeling that it would all come right. "Look at the thing practically," he kept thinking. The faster he walked the firmer became his conviction that he could see the matter through. He

took out his watch—it was already past seven—and he began to hasten back. In the yard of the inn his own driver was harnessing the horses; Swithin went up, and helped him buckle a strap.

"Who told you to put 'em in?" he asked.

The driver answered, "*Der Herr.*"

Swithin felt his resentment return in an alarming way. He took a moody turn across the yard. "In ten minutes," he thought, "I've got to get into that carriage, and sit there, with this beastly thing going on in my head." Could he face it? Could he face the sort of time he had been having that morning, and face it sitting still? And then, looking up, he saw Rozsi gazing down from her open window; never had she looked sweeter, or more roguish. An unaccountable terror seized on him; he ran across the yard and jumped into his carriage. "To Salzburg!" he cried; "drive on!" And as he rattled out of the yard without a look behind, he flung a sovereign at the hostler. Flying back along the road faster even than he had come, with pale face, and eyes blank and staring like a pug-dog's, Swithin spoke no single word; not until they had reached the very door of his lodgings did he suffer the driver to draw rein.

XII.

Towards evening, five days later, Swithin, yellow and travel-worn, was ferried in a gondola to Danielli's Hotel. His brother, who was on the steps, looked at him with a curious apprehension.

"Why, it's you!" he mumbled. "So you've got here safe?"

"Safe?" growled Swithin.

James Forsyte replied, "I thought you wouldn't leave your friends!" Then, with a jerk of suspicion, "You haven't brought your friends?"

"What friends?" growled Swithin.

James Forsyte hastily changed the subject. "You don't look the thing," he said.

"Really!" muttered Swithin; "what's that to you?"

He appeared at dinner that night, and fell asleep over his coffee. Neither Traquair nor his brother asked him any further question, nor did they allude to Salzburg; and during the four days which concluded the stay in Venice Swithin went about with his head up, but his eyes half-closed like a dazed man. Only after they had taken ship at Genoa

did he show any sign of healthy interest in life, when, finding that a man on board was perpetually strumming, he locked the piano up and pitched the key into the sea.

That winter in London he behaved much as usual, but more frequently than before a fit of moroseness would seize on him, during which he was not pleasant to approach.

One evening he was walking with a friend in Piccadilly. A girl, coming out of a side-street, accosted him in German. Swithin, after staring at her in silence for fully a minute, handed her a five-pound note, to the utter amazement of his companion; nor could he himself have said what this freak of generosity portended.

Of Rozsi he never heard again. . . .

This was the substance of what he remembered, lying in bed. He stretched out his hand and pressed the bell. The valet appeared, crossing the room like a cat: a Swede, who had been with Swithin many years; a little man with a dried face and fierce moustaches, morbidly sharp nerves, and an inconsistent devotion to his master.

Swithin made a feeble gesture. "Adolf," he said, "I'm very bad."

"Yes, sir!"

"Why do you stand there like a cow?" asked Swithin; "can't you see I'm very bad?"

"Yes, sir!" The valet's face twitched as though some obscure emotion were dancing upon it.

Swithin wheezed, "I shall feel better after dinner. What time is it?"

"Five o'clock."

"I thought it was more. The afternoons are very long."

"Yes, sir!"

Swithin sighed, as though he had expected the consolation of a denial.

"Very likely I shall have a nap. Bring up hot water at half-past six and shave me before dinner."

The valet moved towards the door. Swithin raised himself a little.

"Adolf! what did Mr James say to you?"

Adolf's eyes fixed themselves on his boots; his knees gave little jerks.

"He said you ought to have another doctor; two doctors, he said, better than one. He said, also, he would look in again on his way home."

Swithin grunted, "Umph! What else did he say?"

"He said you didn't take care of yourself."

Swithin glared.

"James is a fool," he muttered; "has anybody been to see me?"

The valet averted his eyes. "Mrs Thomas Forsyte came last Monday fortnight."

"How long have I been ill?"

"Five weeks on Saturday."

"Do you think I am very bad?"

Adolf's face was suddenly covered with crow's-feet. "You have no business to ask me question like that! I am not paid, sir, to answer question like that."

Swithin said faintly, "You're a peppery fool! Open a bottle of champagne!"

Adolf took a bottle of champagne from a cupboard and held some nippers to it. He fixed his eyes on his master. "The doctor said——"

"Open the bottle!"

Adolf exploded, "You want to kill yourself! I wash my hand! You want to kill yourself—this poison!"

"Open the bottle—or I give you warning."

Adolf, grinning under his fierce moustache in a frenzy of nerves, opened the bottle. He wiped a glass elaborately, filled it, and bore it scrupulously to the bedside. Suddenly he twirled up his moustaches, wrung his hands, and burst out, "I give you notice! I give you notice!"

Swithin grinned faintly. "You foreign fool! get out of the room!"

With tears in his eyes the valet retreated; after gesticulating at his master, he suddenly vanished. Swithin sat up.

"He forgot himself!" he thought. Slowly he

raised the glass, then slowly put it back, and sank gasping on his pillows. Almost directly he fell asleep.

He dreamed that he was sitting after dinner in the crowded smoking-room of his club, with its bright walls and trefoils of light — where every evening he was wont to sit, patient, solemn, and lonely, where sometimes he fell asleep, his square, pale old face nodding to one side. He dreamed that he was gazing at the picture over the grate— of an old statesman with high collar, supremely finished face, and sceptic eyebrows — a picture smooth and reticent like sealing-wax, a picture as of a complete document, stamped and signed, without appeal, exhaling the narrow wisdom of a final judgment. All around, like an approving chorus, the electric light hummed, the other members chattered. It had no effect on him— the old, sick member. What they were saying he himself had said a hundred times; besides, had not the old statesman summed it up—sat for a portrait of it? They were talking of investments, horses, cigars, actresses, and machinery, perfectly genuine, real things,—no humbug about them! Why didn't the waiter bring his coffee? Ah! there he was! And slowly, in a fat voice, even in his dream carefully aspirating his *h*'s, he blew the tardy waiter up. . . . What fool was that who the other day asked him for a subscription for

the head waiter's widow? He had poor relations of his own! Who said he never gave to them? Some fellows chattered like old women. They let a lot of fellows into clubs—fellows with no backbone, who couldn't stand up for themselves; if he had been like that, where would he be now? Would he have made his fortune? They would be showing their feelings next! Wistfully he appealed to the old statesman's eyes. . . . Old Lord C—— sitting down over there, the fat old fool, who never would look at him! Didn't want him to, Goodness knew! . . . There was Johnny D——, nice little fellow, who sometimes spoke to him; he was coming up now! And, in his sleep, Swithin gave a decorative wriggle—preening his feathers; he was going to be spoken to!! What was that? Stuff for cleaning boilers—foreign stuff —beautiful—lovely! There was no such thing; boilers couldn't be cleaned, any fool knew that! If an Englishman couldn't clean a boiler, no foreigner could clean one. What did they say? Pack of old women! Again he appealed to the old statesman's eyes: Could boilers be cleaned? But for once those eyes seemed to hesitate, seemed to be blurred, wanting in finality. His mind felt shocked, as if he had received a blow to his morals. If boilers could be cleaned, why, anything might happen! Johnny D—— was going away! Had he been rude? He hadn't meant to be. If fellows only

knew what it was like to sit by yourself and feel ill all the time! How they chattered all round like a lot of monkeys. Hang it! What was the matter with him this evening? Ah! Adolf had put him into a short coat! He hated a short coat, it looked like giving in! He had worn a swallow-tail all his life. An Englishman didn't give in! His mother had told him that when he was a little chap of five; he hadn't forgotten it, had he? Once more he appealed to the old statesman's eyes. They had vanished. In their place were Rozsi's little deep-set eyes, with their wide, far-off look; as he gazed they seemed to brighten like steel and speak to him. Slowly the whole face grew to be hers too, floating, as it were, on the dark background of the picture; and it was pink, and aloof, unfathomable, and enchanting, with fluffy hair and quick lips just as he had seen it last. "Are you looking for me?" she seemed to say; and Swithin answered, "No."

"I could show you things."

"What could you show me that I don't know?" answered Swithin, and in his sleep he groaned.

"This I could show you," she whispered. He felt the touch of fingers on his forehead, and held his breath. "I'm dreaming," he thought in his dream—"I never felt anything like that."

The chattering of the members had died away.

"Where are you?" gasped Swithin; "what's the matter? I'm lost." Rozsi had vanished; but

far away, from behind the picture, there was a sound of light footsteps.

Suddenly, aloud in his sleep, Swithin muttered, "I've missed something."

Again fingers touched his brow; again Rozsi's eyes were looking at him from the wall.

"What is it?" he asked. "Can't I get out of here and come with you? I'm choking."

Slowly she shook her head.

"Why not?" he muttered. "Well—I don't want to—why should I?"

"Why should you?" she whispered.

"I'm not that sort," he shouted back; "I don't give in."

Again she was gone, elusive and silent as a ray of light.

"It's lonely," said Swithin.

A second time in his sleep he groaned aloud, "Oh! I've missed something!"

Once more the old statesman's eyes stared from the wall.

"Could I help it?" Swithin growled at him; but, cynical and concrete, like the eyes of a fish, they gave no reply; and slowly, louder and louder, again grew the chatter of the members.

"The other eyes answered," bawled Swithin; "what have *you* got to say?"

Again he heard the rustling of those light footsteps, and close in his ear a queer noise, like a sob.

He awoke; the sob was his own. Great drops of perspiration stood on his forehead. "What is it?" he thought; "what have I lost?" And slowly his mind began to travel over his investments; he could not think of any single one that was unsafe; but something—something other than investments, something outside his dinner, something beyond the way other men thought, something d—d remote that you couldn't see with your eyes! What was it? Things he had never seen, was never meant to see—sacrifice, chivalry, love, fidelity, beauty, and strange adventure—things remote, that you couldn't see with your eyes—had they come to haunt him?

Gasping for breath, he fought them like a man. If anything were there he would see it—of course he would see it! he was quite safe! Struggling on his pillows, he clutched the glass of champagne. "Never say die!" he muttered. His lips touched the wine. "It isn't the 'Heidseck'!" he thought angrily, and before the reality of his displeasure all that dim vision passed away. But as he bent to drink again something snapped, and, with a sigh, Swithin Forsyte died over the bubbles. . . .

James Forsyte's carriage stopped before the door; he came in, and the valet, trembling, took his hat and stick. James Forsyte spoke: "How's your master?"

The valet answered, "My master is dead!"

"Dead? He can't be dead; who says he's dead? I've brought Blank."

For answer Adolf wrung the hat and stick.

Slowly James Forsyte mounted the stairs. Upon the bed Swithin Forsyte's body was doubled like a sack, his hand still grasped the glass.

James Forsyte paused. "Swithin!" he said, and with his hand behind his ear waited for a reply, but none came. Then, sadly, his pale eyes fixed on the glass, with the conviction of a past-master of the craft, James Forsyte pronounced his brother's epitaph: "He never would take care of himself!"

Slowly in the glass a last bubble rose and burst.

THE SILENCE

THE SILENCE.

I.

IN a car of the Naples express a mining expert was diving into a bag for papers. The strong sunlight showed the fine wrinkles on his brown face and the shabbiness of his short, rough beard. A newspaper cutting slipped from his fingers; he picked it up and read, thinking, "How the dickens did that get in amongst these?" It was from a colonial print three years old; and, as if in that forlorn slip of yellow paper he had encountered some ghost out of his past, he sat staring before him.

These were the words he read: "We hope that the set-back to civilisation, the check to commerce and development, in this promising centre of our colony may be but temporary; that enterprising spirits endowed with capital may come to the rescue. We feel constrained to ask why, where

one man was successful, others should fail? We are convinced that it only needs——" . . . And again the last words: "For what can be sadder than to see the forest spreading its lengthening shadows, like symbols of defeat, over the untenanted dwellings of men; and, where was once the merry chatter of human voices, to pass by in the silence——" . . .

On an afternoon, thirteen years before, he had been in the city of London, at one of those emporiums of mining experts where they perch before other flights, like sea-gulls on some favourite rock. A clerk said to him, "Mr Scorrier, they are asking for you on the telephone—Mr Hemmings of the New Colliery Company."

Scorrier went to the tube. The words emerged, "Is that you, Mr Scorrier? I hope you are very well, sir, I am—Hemmings—I am—coming round."

In ten minutes he appeared, Christopher Hemmings, secretary of the New Colliery Company, known in the City—behind his back—as "down-by-the-starn" Hemmings. He grasped Scorrier's hand—the gesture was deferential, but of a conscious distinction. He looked a little too handsome, a little too capable, a little too important; his figure, the cut of his iron-grey beard, his fixed, intrusively fine eyes, seemed to convey a courteous invitation to inspect his infallibility. He suggested a City "Atlas"—with legs apart, coat-tails gathered

in the hands, a whole globe of financial matter deftly balanced on the tip of the nose, "Look at me!" he seemed to say; "it's heavy, but how easily I carry it off. Not the man to let it down, sir!"

He began: "I hope I see you well; I have come round about our mine. There is a question of a fresh field being opened up — between ourselves, not before it's wanted. I find it difficult to get my Board to take a comprehensive view. In short, the question is, Are you prepared to go out and make a report? The fees will be all right"; and his fine eyes expressed in their stare all the confidential intimacy of a wink. "Things have been bad; we are going to change our superintendent. I have got little Pippin—you know little Pippin?"

Scorrier, full of an undefined resentment, said, "Yes"; adding, "He's not a mining man!"

To which Hemmings replied, "We think he will do"; and Scorrier mentally ejaculated, "Do you? that's good of you!"

He had not altogether shaken off a kind of worship he had had for Pippin—"King" Pippin he was always called—when they had been boys at the Camborne Grammar-school. "King" Pippin! the boy with the very bright hair, broad shoulders, little stoop in the neck, and a way of moving it quickly like a bird; with a bright colour, and bright, subtle, elusive eyes, who was always top

of everything, and held his head on one side as if looking for something else to be top of. He remembered how one day "King" Pippin had said to him in his soft way, "Young Scorrie, I'll do your sums"; and in answer to his dubious, "Is that all right?" had replied, "Of course—I don't want you to get behind that beast Blake, he's not a Cornishman" (the beast Blake was an Irishman not yet twelve). He remembered, too, an occasion when "King" Pippin with two other boys fought six louts and got a licking, and how Pippin sat for half an hour afterwards, all bloody, his head in his hands, rocking to and fro, and weeping tears of mortification; but the next day sneaked off by himself, and, attacking the same gang, got frightfully mauled a second time. Thinking of these things he answered curtly, "When shall I start?"

"Down-by-the-starn" Hemmings replied with a sort of infernal sprightliness. "There's a good fellow! I will send your instructions; so glad to see you well." Conferring on Scorrier an ineffable look—fine to the point of indecency—he withdrew. Scorrier remained seated, heavy with his own insignificance and a vague oppression, as if he had drunk a tumbler of sweet port.

A week later, in company with the new superintendent, he was on board an Atlantic liner.

The "King" Pippin of his school-days was now

a man of forty-four. He awakened in Scorrier the uncertain wonder with which we look back at our own uncomplicated teens. Staggering up and down the decks in the long Atlantic roll, he would steal a look at his companion, as if he thereby expected to find out something illuminating about himself. The quality in Pippin that gave him most food for reflection, however, was the latter's desire to walk about all day, and his surprising, quite unconscious, ways of saving himself, without using hands, from collisions with the bulwarks. He had still "King" Pippin's bright, fine hair, and streaks in his short beard that were quite dazzling; he had still his bright colour and suave voice, and what there were of wrinkles suggested only subtleties of humour and ironical sympathy. Further, from the first, and without negotiation, he had his seat at the captain's table, to which on the second day Scorrier found himself mysteriously translated, and had to sit, as he expressed it ruefully, "among the big-wigs."

During the voyage only one incident impressed itself on Scorrier's memory, and that for a personally disconcerting reason. In the forecastle were the usual complement of emigrants. One evening, as he was leaning over the rail to watch them, he felt his arm pressed; looking round, he saw Pippin. The latter was breathing hard, and in the lamplight his face and beard quivered. "Poor people!"

he murmured. The idea flashed on Scorrier that he was like some instrument made of fine wires.

"Suppose one were to snap!" he thought; and this flight of fancy was so disturbingly unusual that he dosed himself with rum, and retired to his berth instead of playing the usual rubber. The next day, however, impelled by an obscure impulse to justify himself, he blurted out, "You're a nervous chap. The way you looked at those poor devils!"

Pippin hustled him softly along the deck. "Come, come, you took me off my guard," he murmured, with a smile of gentle slyness; "that's not fair."

They spent two evenings over the Company's mine maps, and, after each, Scorrier turned in with the sense that he, the expert, had learnt more than he had taught the layman.

It was a continual wonder to him that Pippin, at his age, should cut himself adrift from all the associations and security of his London life to begin a new career in a new country with dubious prospect of success. "What makes him?" he thought. "I always heard he was doing well all round. Perhaps he thinks he'll better himself." He always wound up with disapproving pride—"He's a true Cornishman."

The morning they arrived at the mines was grey and cheerless; a cloud of smoke, beaten down by

the drizzle, clung over the forest; out of clearings the shapes of wooden houses struggled dismally in the unkempt semblance of a street; and in the background were the woods — the endless, silent woods. An air of blank discouragement reigned everywhere; the arms of the cranes jutted idly over empty trucks; the long jetty oozed black slime; miners with listless faces stood about in the rain; dogs fought apathetically under their very legs. On the way to the hotel they met no one busy or serene except a Chinaman who was polishing a dish-cover.

The late superintendent, a cowed man, regaled them at lunch with dismal forebodings; his attitude towards the situation resembled the food, which was greasy, sad, and uninspiring. Alone again, they looked at each other.

"Oh dear!" sighed Pippin. Scorrier, whose sense of humour was not great, did not laugh. Pippin began talking; and across the table Scorrier watched the quick movements of his hand about his mouth, the subtle changes in his eyes, with an idea that he had dropped back into Camborne days. "We must change all this, Scorrier; it will never do to go back beaten. I shall not go back beaten; when I go you will have to carry me on my shield;" and slyly, "Too heavy, eh? Poor fellow!" Then for a long time he was

silent, moving his lips as if he were counting up the cost. Suddenly he sighed, and grasping Scorrier's arm, smiled. "I'm too dull. What will you do? Put me in your report, 'New Superintendent—a sad, dull dog—not a word to throw at a cat!'" But again, as if the new task were too much for him, he relapsed into thought, sitting with his head on his hands. The last words he said to Scorrier that night were, "It's very silent. What are they thinking of at home? It's hard to believe one's here for life. Yes—I feel I'm here for life. . . . Mustn't be a coward — eh, Scorrier?" and brushing his forehead, as though to clear from it a cobweb of faint thoughts, he hurried away.

Scorrier remained on the verandah smoking. It had ceased raining, a few stars burnt dimly; and even above the squalor of the township the scent of the forests, the interminable forests, brooded. By a queer freak of memory there sprang into his mind a picture from one of his children's fairy books—the picture of a little bearded man on tiptoe, with poised head and a great sword, slashing at the castle of a giant. It reminded him of Pippin. And suddenly, even to Scorrier, —whose very existence was one long encounter with strange places,—the unseen presence of those woods, their heavy, healthy scent, the little sounds, like squeaks of tiny toys, out of the gloomy

silence, seemed intolerable, to be shunned, kept out of sight from a mere instinct of self-preservation. His thoughts ran off to the evening spent in the bosom of "down-by-the-starn" Hemmings's family, when he was receiving his instructions —the security of that suburban villa, its discouraging gentility; the superior acidity of the Miss Hemmings; the noble names of large contractors, of large company promoters, of a peer, dragged with the lightness of gun-carriages across and across the conversation; the autocratic placidity of Hemmings, rasped up here and there, to be sure, by some domestic contradiction. It was all so nice and safe—as if the whole thing had been fastened to an anchor sunk beneath the pink cabbages of the drawing-room carpet! Hemmings, coming out to the door with a hand on his shoulder, had said in jovial secrecy, "Little Pippin will have a good thing. We shall make his salary £——. He'll be a great man — quite a king. Ha—ha!"

Slowly Scorrier shook the ashes out of his pipe. "Salary!" he thought, straining his ears; "I wouldn't take the place for a salary of £5000. Yet it's a fine country," and with ironical violence he repeated aloud, "A dashed fine country!"

Ten days later, his report on the new mine finished, he stood with Pippin on the jetty. The latter

held his hand hard. "Tell them," he said—"tell them they needn't be afraid; and sometimes when you're at home think of me, eh? God bless you!"

Scorrier, scrambling on board, had a confused memory of eyes with tears in them, of abrupt movements, and a convulsive hand-shake.

II.

It was eight years before the wheels of his life carried Scorrier back there, and this time not on the business of the New Colliery Company. He went for another company with a mine thirty miles north. Before starting he paid a visit to Hemmings. The secretary was sitting surrounded by pigeon-holes, a finer creature than ever. Scorrier felt himself blink before the bland radiance of his courtesy. A little man with eyebrows full of fierce questions, and a grizzled beard, occupied an arm-chair before the fireplace.

"You know Mr Booker," said Hemmings—"one of my directors. This is Mr Scorrier, sir—who went out for us."

The tail of each sentence was murmured in a way suggestive of its uncommon value. The director, uncrossing his legs, made a remark in an unexpected tone of politeness. Scorrier bowed, and Hemmings, leaning back, slowly developed the full resources of his waistcoat.

"So you are going out again, Mr Scorrier, for the other side? I tell Mr Scorrier, sir, that he is going

out for the enemy. Don't find them a mine as good as you found us, there's a good man."

The little director said in an explosive voice, "Did you see our last dividend? Twenty per cent; not bad?"

Hemmings, button-holing Scorrier with his eyes, made a deprecatory movement of a finger, as if reproving his director. "I will not disguise from you," he murmured, "that there is a good deal of friction between us and—the enemy; you know our position too well—just a little too well, eh? 'A nod's as good as a wink.'"

The diplomatic flattery of his eyes appeared overpowering to Scorrier; he passed a hand across his brow—and muttered, "Of course."

"Pippin doesn't hit it off with them. Between ourselves, he's too big for his boots. You know what it is when a man in his position gets a sudden rise!"

Scorrier caught himself searching on the floor for a sight of Hemmings's boots; he raised his eyes guiltily.

The secretary continued, "We don't hear from him quite as often as we should like."

To his own surprise Scorrier ejaculated, "It's a silent place!"

The secretary smiled indulgently. "Very good! Mr Scorrier says, sir, it's a silent place; ha—ha! I call that very good!" but suddenly some secret

irritation bubbled up in him; he burst forth with suave violence, "He's no business to let it affect him; now, has he? I put it to you!"

Soon after Scorrier took his leave: he had been asked to convey a friendly hint to Pippin that more letters would be acceptable. As he stood in the shadow of the Royal Exchange, waiting to thread his way across the street, he thought irritably, "So you must have noise—well, you've got some to spare here." . . .

On his arrival in America he wired to Pippin asking if he might stay with him a couple of days on his way through, and received the answer, "Be sure and come."

A week later he arrived at the mines (there was now a railway), and found Pippin awaiting him in a phaeton. Scorrier would not have known the place again; there seemed a bewildering glitter over everything, as if some one had touched it all with a fairy wand. The tracks had given place to roads, running firm, straight, and black between the trees under the brilliant sunshine; the wooden houses were painted; out in the gleaming harbour amongst the green of the islands lay three steamers, each with a fleet of busy boats; and here and there a tiny yacht floated like a bird resting on the water. Pippin drove the long-tailed horses furiously; he kept his head turned towards Scorrier; his eyes were full of subtle benevolence, as if according

him a continual welcome. During those two days Scorrier never got rid of that feeling of glamour; he even felt uneasy. There was some magic knocking about! The sounds of interviews between his host and every kind of human fowl were interesting. Through the wooden walls the visitors' voices penetrated—angry, discontented, matter-of-fact, with nasal twangs, guttural drawls, or the purest colonial accent; and the soft patter of the superintendent's feet crossing and recrossing the room made them an accompaniment. Then would come a pause, the sound of hard breathing, quick interrogations — the visitor's voice again, again the patter, a gentle decisive murmur, and out would come the visitor with an expression on his face that Scorrier began to know by heart, a kind of pleased, puzzled, helpless "I-know-I've-been-done" look, with a sub-acid suggestion of self-punishment—when once round the corner.

Pippin was full of questions, humble and wistful, about "home." He wanted details of music, pictures, plays (none of which Scorrier could give him), of how London looked, what new streets there were, and, above all, whether Scorrier had been lately in the West Country. He talked of getting leave in the winter, asked whether he thought they would "put up with him at home"; and then, pressing his hand to his mouth, with the agitation of voice which had alarmed Scorrier

once before, added, "Do you know—I'm not fit for home. One gets spoiled; it's big and silent here. What should I have to go back to? I don't seem able to realise."

Scorrier thought of Hemmings, and muttered, "'Tis a bit cramped, certainly."

Pippin went on as if he had divined the thought, "I suppose our friend Hemmings would call me foolish; he's above these little weaknesses, eh, Scorrier? Sometimes in the evening I would give my stupid head for some one to talk to—Hemmings would never give his head for anything, would he? but no, I couldn't face it at home. Spoiled, spoiled;" and slyly he murmured, "What would the Board say if they could hear me?"

Scorrier blurted out, "To tell you the truth, they complain a little of *not* hearing from you."

Pippin put his hands to his head and twirled on his heels. He stood in the window with a hand pressed outwards on the pane, as if pushing something away. "Let them try the life here!" he broke out; "it's like sitting on a volcano—what with 'the enemy' over there, the men, the American market. I keep it going, Scorrier, but at what a cost—at what a cost!"

"But surely letters?"

Pippin only answered, "I try—how I try!"

Scorrier felt with remorse and wonder that he spoke truth. The next day he left for his inspec-

tion, and while he was in the camp of the enemy much was the talk he heard of Pippin.

"Why," said his host, the chief of the mine, a little man with a face like a well-conditioned owl's; "d'you know the name they've given him down at the capital—'the King'—good, eh? He has made them 'sit up' all along this coast. I like him well enough—good-hearted man, awfully nervous; but my people down there can't stand him at any price. Sir, he runs this colony. Mild? You'd think butter wouldn't melt in his mouth; but he's a terror for getting his own way; that's what riles 'em; that and the success he's making of his mine. It puzzles me; you'd think he'd be only too glad of a quiet life, man with his nerves. But no, he's never happy unless he's got a fight on, something where he's a chance to score a victory. I won't say he likes it, but, by Jove, it seems he's got to do it. Now that's funny to me! I'll tell you one thing, though, I shouldn't be surprised if he broke down suddenly some day; and I'll tell you another," he added darkly, "he's sailing very near the wind, with those large contracts right ahead. I wouldn't care to take his risks. Just let them have a strike, or something that shuts them down a spell—mark my words, sir—it'll be all u-p with their mine. But," he concluded confidentially, "I wish I had his hold on the men; it's a great thing in a country like this. It's not like at home, where

you can go round a corner and get another gang. You have to do the best you can with the lot you have; you won't get another man on the whole coast without you ship him a few hundred miles." With a frown he waved his arm as if to indicate the emptiness of the land.

III.

Scorrier completed his inspection and went on a shooting trip into the forest. His host met him on his return. "Just look at this!" he said, holding out a telegram; "awful, isn't it?" His face expressed profound commiseration, with a ludicrous dash of the ashamed satisfaction experienced at the misfortunes of an enemy.

The telegram, dated the day before, ran, "Frightful explosion, New Colliery, this morning; great loss of life feared."

Scorrier had the bewildered thought, "Now Pippin will want me."

He took leave of his host, who called after him, "You'd better wait! One of our steamers could take you to-morrow night. It's a beastly drive!"

Scorrier shook his head. All night, jolting along a track cut through the forest, he thought of Pippin. The other miseries of such a calamity left him cold: he barely thought of the smothered men; but Pippin's struggle, a lonely encounter with a hydra-headed monster, touched him very nearly. He fell asleep and dreamed of watching him slowly strangled

by a snake; the agonised, yet kindly ironical face peeping out between two gleaming coils was so real that he awoke. It was the moment before dawn: the pitch-black branches barred the black sky; with each jolt of the wheels the buggy lights danced, fantastic and intrusive, round ferns and tree-stems, into the cold heart of the forest; and for an hour or more he tried to feign sleep, hiding from the damp stillness, the overmastering gloom of the woods. Then softly stole up a whisper of noises, a stir of light, and the whole slow radiance of morning glory; but it put no warmth into him. He wrapped himself closer in his cloak, feeling as though old age had touched him.

Close on noon he arrived in the township. The glamour seemed still upon it. He drove on to the mine. The winding-engine was turning, the pulley at the top of the head-gear whizzing round; nothing looked unusual. "Some mistake!" he thought. He drove up to the mine buildings, alighted, and climbed to the head of the shaft. Instead of the usual rumble of trolleys, rattle of coal discharged over the screens, and general din, was silence. Pippin stood there in a light overcoat smirched with dirt. The cage, coming swiftly and silently from below, shot open its doors with a sudden rattle; out of it was lifted a body. Scorrier bent forward; the dead man's face wore a smile.

"How many?" he whispered.

Pippin answered, "Eighty-four brought up—forty-seven still below," and entered the man's name in a pocket-book.

An older man was taken out: he too was smiling—he had been given a taste of unearthly joys. The sight of those smiles affected Scorrier more than all the anguish or despair he had seen scored on the faces of other dead men. He sat down a few paces away. An old miner was standing near. Scorrier pointed to Pippin and asked, "How long has he been at this?"

"He and I've been at the game thirty hours. Yesterday he was below; we had to nigh force him up at last. He wants to go again, but the chaps allow they won't lower him"; the old man gave a dry chuckle. "I'm waiting for my boy to come up, I am," he added.

Scorrier waited too—there was a morbid fascination about that procession of smiling bodies. All was still; the faces of the waiting gang wore blank stares. A voice droned, the cage was disclosed, every head craned forward, and with rapid precision a body was disembarked. The process possessed the excitement of a lottery. In time he grew sleepy in the sun. The old miner woke him, saying, "Rummy stuff this 'ere choke-damp; see, they all dies drunk!"

The next was the chief engineer—a Scotsman—whom he had known well, one of those men who

seem born at the age of thirty-five and remain so all their lives. His face — the only one that wore no smile—was grim and pathetic, as though grieving that duty had deprived it of that last luxury. With wide eyes and drawn lips he had died protesting.

Late in the afternoon the old miner touched Scorrier's arm, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and said, "There he is — there's my boy!" He seemed to think that Scorrier had earned a right to the information. A few minutes later he departed with slow steps, wheeling the body on a trolley.

As the sun set the gang below came up. They could search no farther till the fumes had cleared. Scorrier heard one say, "There's some we'll never get; they've had sure burial." Another answered, "Good enough bag for me!" They passed him, the whites of their eyes gleaming in a scared way out of faces black as ink.

On the way home Scorrier would have taken the reins, but Pippin deprived him gently of them; and they gained the town at a furious pace, neither speaking a single word. As they turned into the main street, a young woman starting out in front of the horses obliged Pippin to pull up with a jerk. He bent a glance on Scorrier that was ludicrous in its prescience of suffering. The woman was there to ask for her husband: he had not come

up; wasn't it possible he might be living? Three times they were stopped by women asking for a husband or son. Pippin whispered as they went indoors, "This is what I have to go through."

Later, when they had had something to eat, he said, grasping Scorrier's arm, "How kind you were to come and stand by me! They take me for a god, but you can't think what a poor creature I feel. . . . Shall I get the men down again? shall I ever get them down? Their nerve's shaken; I can see it. . . . Scorrier, this has eaten into me! I wish I were one of those poor lads; lovely to die with a smile like that!"

Scorrier felt the futility of his own assistance. On Pippin alone must be the heat and burden. Would he stand under it, or would the whole thing come to the ground with a crash? "He thanks me for sticking to him," he thought; "but he's alone for all that!" and, like a second in a fight, was conscious of an impulse to nurse Pippin for the effort. "You ought to get to bed," he urged; "no man can stand this sort of thing."

Pippin gave him one of his subtle smiles. "You don't know how strong I am!"

Scorrier repeated feebly, "You ought to get to bed!" and, with the view of furthering that end, took his own departure.

IV.

He slept heavily, and woke at dawn; the same sporting instinct prompted him to get up and listen at Pippin's door. It was still open. He went downstairs and found Pippin seated at a writing-table covered with papers and charts; the pen had dropped out of his hand; he was asleep, his head on his arms, his beard brushing the table. The ink was still wet; Scorrier's eye caught the opening words:—

"Gentlemen,—Since this happened I have not slept." . . .

He stole away again with a sense of humility, and of indignation that no one could be dragged in to share that fight. The other end of the stick—the London board-room—rose before his mind. He imagined the portentous gravity of Hemmings's face, his subdued voice, conveying the impression that he alone could save the situation; the six directors, all men of common-sense, and probably humane, seated behind ink-pots as large as turrets;

the irritated concern in their voices, asking how it could have happened; their comments: "An awful thing!" "I suppose Pippin is doing the best he can!" "Wire him on no account to leave the mine idle!" "Poor devils!" "A fund? Of course start a fund—what ought we to give?" He rolled about in bed with a strong conviction that nothing of all this would disturb the common-sense and method with which they would go home and eat their mutton. It was human nature—a good thing too, the less of this taking things to heart the better! But he felt angry. The fight was unfair! A fellow all nerves—with nobody to help him, not a soul. Well, it was his own look-out! He had chosen to centre everything in himself, made himself the very soul of the thing. He had to prove himself good enough to swim, or the whole concern must go to the bottom! Scorrier felt a touch of superstition, and the whistling of the morning wind in the pines gave him a cold feeling down the back. Still, by a subtle thread, the old hero-worship held. "Man against nature," he thought, "I back the man." From that moment the struggle, in which he was powerless to help, became to him something intensely personal, as if he had engaged his own good faith therein.

The next day they went again to the pit-head, and this time Scorrier descended. The fumes had

almost cleared, but there were some places which would never be reached. At the end of the day all but four bodies had been recovered. A miner remarked, "At the day of judgment there'll be they four to come out of here." Those unclaimed bodies haunted Scorrier, though he too recognised the uselessness of further search. He came across writings on the walls of the mine, where men waiting to be suffocated had recorded their feelings. They did not amount to much. In one place a man had written down the hour and the word "Sleepy," and signed his name. In another, "A. F.—done for," was scrawled. When he came up at last Pippin was still waiting, pocket-book in hand; and they departed silently as on the previous day at a furious pace.

Two days later Scorrier visited the shaft by himself, and found its neighbourhood deserted—not a living thing of any sort within sight except a Chinaman poking a stick into some rubbish. On his return to Pippin, who had been away down the coast to engage an engineer, he had not the heart to tell him of this sudden desertion. He was spared the effort, for Pippin, with one of his smiles, said, "Don't be afraid—you've got bad news. The men have struck?"

Scorrier sighed out, "Deserted—lock, stock, and barrel."

"I thought so—see what I have here!" He put before Scorrier a telegram:—

"At all costs keep working—fatal to stop—manage this somehow. HEMMINGS."

Breathing quickly, he added, "As if I didn't know! A little hard—'manage this somehow'—a little hard!"

Scorrier asked, "What's to be done?"

"You see I am commanded!" Pippin answered bitterly. "Oh! they're quite right; we *must* keep working—our contracts! They won't spare me. Now I'm down—not a soul will spare me!"

He sat feverishly silent, and Scorrier watched him with a kind of pleasure. "His back's against the wall!" he thought.

The miners' mass-meeting was held the next day in a clearing on the outskirts of the township. Pippin pointed out the irony of the choice; he had had the place cleared to make a public recreation-ground, a sort of feather in the company's cap; it was now selected as the spot whereon to decide whether the company should exist.

The sky was crossed in the west by a single line of cloud like a bar of beaten gold; tree shadows were creeping out towards the groups of men; the evening savour, that strong fragrance of the forest, burdened the air. All around amongst the burnt tree-stumps stood the miners, cowed and sulky, as

if they had been inexplicably ill-used. They looked incapable of expressing anything, incapable of being moved; through the half-meaningless chorus of their complaints it was this unvoiced paralysis which impressed Scorrier as the real heart of the danger. He eagerly watched Pippin, who sat in the phaeton with his hat off, a focus for all those sullen, restless eyes. The superintendent's quick questions, elusive glances, sudden smiles, the ironical despair in the shake of his head, his silences even, were mesmeric. Would he last? would the wires hold? It was like watching a man finishing a race. And just then caught on Pippin's face a baffled look, as if he despaired of piercing that stolid paralysis; in the very same instant the eyes of the men began wandering; a stealthy violence crept into them. "He's lost his hold," thought Scorrier; "it's all up!" and, bitterly dejected, bent to knock the ashes out of his pipe.

A miner beside him muttered, "Look out!"

Pippin had stood up in the phaeton, a hand behind his ear, as if to catch the secret whispers of the crowd. He began to speak—his words were cunning, bitter, inspiring, desperate, a last effort: "You shan't throw me over; do you think I'll give up all I've done for the place? I'll make you the first power in the colony! Are we here to turn tail at the first shot? My lads, you're a set of cowards."

It was a little too exciting; each man, as he listened, had a different motion of the hands—one waved them, another kept jobbing his fist downwards, as if stabbing somebody in the back. The miner next to Scorrier, a grisly-bearded, beetle-browed, twinkling-eyed old Cornishman, muttered continually, "A'hm not troublin' about that," though what it was he was not troubling about Scorrier had no idea. The crowd was being deliberately lashed. It seemed as if the superintendent's object was to get his men to kill him; they gathered closer, crouching, as it were, for a rush. Suddenly Pippin's voice dropped to a whisper: "I'm disgraced! Men, are you going back on me?"

Scorrier felt upset; he turned to the old Cornishman next him and said violently, "Call yourself a West-countryman and won't stand by a brother?" . . . To that very day he remembered the drop of the old fellow's jaw.

Pippin's whisper had been the death-blow of the meeting. It broke into gesticulating groups, and finally melted away.

In the evening a deputation came from the men; all night long their voices sounded, and Pippin's footsteps, up and down, never ceased. In the morning the superintendent went early to the mine. Before supper the deputation came again; and again Scorrier turned in, to listen to the sound of voices and footsteps until he fell asleep; but just

before dawn he was awakened by a light, and at his bedside saw Pippin, who said, with a tired smile, "The men go down to-morrow. What did I tell you? Carry me home on my shield, eh?"

A week later the mine was in full work.

V.

Two years after, in the summer, Scorrier heard of Pippin again. A note reached him from Hemmings asking if he could make it convenient to attend their board meeting on the following Thursday. He arrived rather before the appointed time. The secretary received him, and, in answer to Scorrier's inquiry, said, "Thank you, we are doing well—between ourselves, we are doing very well."

"And Pippin?"

A cloud came over the secretary's brow. "Ah, Pippin! We asked you to come on his account. Pippin is giving us a great deal of trouble." He dropped his voice. "We have not had a single line from him for two years!" He spoke with such a sense of personal grievance that Scorrier felt quite sorry. "Not a single line," pursued Hemmings, "since that explosion—you were there at the time, I remember! It makes it very awkward; I call it insulting to *me*."

"But how——" began Scorrier.

"We get—telegrams. He writes to no one, not even to his family. He's like a man in a pit," Hem-

mings continued, as if the violence of his feelings had called up this surprising image; "and why? Just tell me why? We hear *of* him; he's a great nob out there. Nothing's done in the colony without his finger's in the pie. He turned out the last Government because they wouldn't grant us an extension for our railway—shows he can't be a fool; besides, look at our balance-sheet," he concluded with pathetic justice. . . .

Scorrier took his seat in the board-room with the resentful bewilderment always conferred on him by an interview with Hemmings. The question on which his opinion was desired was, whether Hemmings should be sent out to see what was the matter with the superintendent. During the discussion he listened to strictures on Pippin's silence with the sense of committing a treachery. Every now and then something illuminating sprang up in his mind which he felt sure would make all plain, even to the common-sense of the directors; but when he came to put it into words it absolutely refused to exist; he could only mutter, "The explosion! A very trying time!"

Mr Booker pounced on him: "A very trying time! So it was—to all of us. But what excuse is that—now, Mr Scorrier, what excuse is that?"

Scorrier was obliged to admit that it was none.

"Business is business! now, isn't it?"

Scorrier, gazing dejectedly at the methodical

appearance of the board-room, assented. A deaf director, who had not spoken for eighteen months, said with sudden ferocity, "It's disgraceful!" He was doubtless liberating his bosom of a fund of unuttered disapprovals. One perfectly neat, benevolent old fellow, however, who kept his hat on, and had a single vice—that of coming to the board-room with a brown paper parcel tied up with string—murmured, "We must make allowances," and started an anecdote about himself as a boy. He was gently reproved by his secretary. Scorrier was asked for his opinion. He looked at Hemmings's face. "My importance is concerned; I don't care a button for your opinion," was written on it. Moved by an impulse of loyalty to Pippin, he answered, as if it were all settled, "Well, let me know when you start, Hemmings—I would like the trip myself."

Presently, as he was leaving the room, the chairman, with a serio-comic look at Hemmings, spoke to him aside. "Glad to hear you say that about going too, Mr Scorrier; we must be careful—he's an awfully sensitive chap." Scorrier went out wondering; it did not appear clear whether Pippin or Hemmings had been meant.

In fact he did go out with Hemmings. One of the things he would never forget was the secretary's first encounter with sea-sickness; the dignified noisiness of his prostration remained an ineffaceable

memory; it was sonorous and vast—the prostration of a fine man; and the manner in which he afterwards spoke of it, taking casual acquaintances into the recesses of those sufferings, was touching.

Pippin came to the capital to escort them, provided for their comforts as if they had been royalty, and had a special train to take them to the mines.

He was a little stouter, a little brighter of colour, and greyer of beard, a thought more nervous in voice and breathing; his manner to Hemmings was full of flattering courtesy, and the sly irony of his glances played on the secretary's armour like a fountain on a hippopotamus. To Scorrier he could not show enough affection.

The first evening when Hemmings had gone to his room he jumped from his chair like a boy just out of school. "So I'm going to get a wigging," he said; "I suppose I deserve it; but if you knew —if you *only* knew! . . . Out here they've nicknamed me 'the King,' you see *I* know everything—they say I rule the colony. It's myself I can't rule"; and with a sudden burst of passion such as Scorrier had never seen in him: "Why did they send this man here? What can he know about me —the things I've been through? I can't stand it!" But in a moment he was calm again. "There, there! this is very stupid; worrying you like this!" and with a long, kind look into Scorrier's face, he hustled him away to his room.

Pippin did not break out again, though sometimes fire seemed to smoulder beneath the courteous irony of his manner. Some intuition of danger had smitten Hemmings, for he made no allusion to the object of his visit. There were moments when Scorrier's common-sense threw his sympathy over to Hemmings's side—these were moments when the secretary was not present.

"After all," he told himself, "it's a little thing to ask—a letter a-month. I never heard of such a case." It was wonderful how they stood it! They wouldn't if they weren't afraid of him! What was the matter with the superintendent? What was the nature of his trouble? The most fantastical in the world—yet as real as a wall. The conclusion he came to was that neither he nor any one else could understand it—he might have glimpses, but he would never be able to put his finger on its pulse. One glimpse of the cause he certainly had, when even Hemmings, as he phrased it, received "quite a turn." It was during a drive back from the most outlying of the Company's "trials," eight miles out in the forest. The track led through a belt blackened by a forest fire. Pippin was driving, the secretary seated beside him with the faint alarm that the superintendent's driving had the power to call up on his dignified features. Scorrier faced them. The sky had darkened strangely, and pale

streaks of light, coming from one knew not where, wandered amongst the trees. Not a breath stirred; the wheels and horses' hoofs made no sound on the fern mould. All around, the burnt tree-trunks, leafless and jagged, rose like withered giants, the passages between them were black, the sky black, and black the silence. No one spoke, and literally the only sound was Pippin's breathing. What was it that was terrifying? Scorrier could not have said. He had the feeling of being entombed; that nobody could help him; the feeling of being face to face with himself; a sensation as if all the comforting words and rules he had ever known had dropped away from him. And yet—nothing happened, absolutely nothing. They reached home and dined.

During dinner he had again the old reminiscence of a little man chopping at a castle with a big sword. It came in a moment when Pippin had lifted his hand with a knife in it to answer some remark of Hemmings's about the future of the Company. The optimism of his uplifted chin, the strenuous energy in his voice, gave Scorrier juster measure of the nature of his efforts than he had ever had before. A new country, where nothing could help a man but himself—that was the castle! No wonder he was impatient of control, no wonder he had got out of hand, no wonder he was silent—chopping away at that! Suddenly he thought,

"What's the good of struggling? Nature's sure to beat you in the end!"

That very evening Hemmings delivered himself of his reproof. He had sat silent a long time; Scorrier, indeed, had thought him a little drunk, so portentous was his gravity; suddenly he rose, wiped his beard emotionally with his handkerchief, and began. It was hard upon a man, he said, in his position, with a board of directors (he spoke as of a family of small children), to be kept so short of information. He was actually compelled to imagine things to answer the questions of his shareholders. This was painful—humiliating; he had never heard of any secretary having to imagine things; he went further—it was insulting! He had grown grey in the service of the Company. Mr Scorrier would bear him out when he said he had a position to maintain—his name in the City was a high one; and, by George! he was going to keep it a high one; he would allow nobody to drag him through the mud—no one—that ought to be clearly understood. His directors felt they were being treated as children; it was absurd to suppose that he (Hemmings) could be treated as a child! . . . The secretary paused, he seemed to bully the room with his eyes.

Pippin had not stirred; he said, "If there were *no* London office, the shareholders would get the same dividends."

Hemmings gasped as though he had received a blow in the "wind"; laughed from a sense of duty, and said, "Come! this is monstrous!"

Pippin answered, "What help did I get from London when I first came here? What help have I ever had?"

Hemmings swayed, recovered, and with a forced smile replied that, if this were true, he had been standing on his head all his life; he did not believe the attitude possible for such a length of time; personally he would have thought that he too had had a little something to say to the Company's position, but no matter! . . . His irony was crushing, it was so heavy. Pippin's hands were pressed to his forehead. Hemmings went on: It was possible that Mr Pippin hoped to reverse the existing laws of the universe with regard to Limited companies; he would merely say that he must not begin with a company of which he (Hemmings) was secretary. Mr Scorrier had hinted that there were excuses; for his part, with the best intentions in the world, he had had great difficulty in seeing them. He would go further—he did *not* see them! The explosion! . . . Pippin shrank so visibly that the secretary seemed troubled by a suspicion that he was going too far.

"We know it was trying for you——"

"Trying!" burst out Pippin.

"No one can say," resumed Hemmings sooth-

ingly, "that we've not dealt liberally with you;" Pippin made a despairing motion of the head. "We think we have a good superintendent; I go further, an excellent superintendent. I am the last to wish for any unpleasantness. What I say is, Let's be jolly together! Look at the thing as a man of the world—then you must agree that I am not making an unreasonable request!" He ended on a note of jocularity befitting a man of the world; and, as if by common consent, all three withdrew, each to his own room, without another word.

In the course of the following day Pippin said humbly to Scorrier, "It seems I have been very wicked. I must try to do better"; and with a touch of bitter humour, "They are kind enough to think me a good superintendent, you see! After that I must try hard."

Scorrier broke in, "No man could have done as much for them"; and, carried away by an impulse to put things absolutely straight, went on: "But, after all, these letters—what does it amount to?"

Pippin besieged him with a subtle look. "You too?" he said—"I must have been wicked indeed!" and turned away.

Scorrier felt he had been guilty of a brutality; he felt sorry for Pippin and angry with himself, angry with Pippin and sorry for himself. He earnestly desired to see the back of Hemmings. The secretary gratified the wish a few days later, depart-

ing by steamer with the most ponderous expressions of regard and the assurance of his goodwill.

Pippin gave vent to no outburst of relief, but maintained a courteous silence about his late guest, making only one allusion to him, and that in answer to a question of Scorrier's—

"Ah! don't tempt me! mustn't speak behind his back."

VI.

A MONTH passed, and still Scorrier remained as Pippin's guest. Each mail-day produced a state of suppressed excitement. On one of these occasions Pippin withdrew to his room to write; but when Scorrier went to fetch him to dinner he found him with his head in his hands, and on the table a perfect litter of torn paper.

"I can't do it—I feel a hypocrite; I can't put myself into leading-strings now," he broke out. "Why should I ask these people, when I've settled everything already? If it were a vital thing they wouldn't want to hear—they'd wire, 'Manage this somehow!'"

Scorrier said nothing, but privately thought, "It's a mad business!" What was it but a letter —a letter? Good gracious! why make such a fuss about a letter? He was much disappointed, and anxious too. The approach of each mail-day seemed an increasing nightmare to the superintendent; he became more and more feverishly nervous, like a man paralysed by a spell; and, when the mail had gone, behaved with the joy of

a respited criminal. And this had been going on two years! Ever since that explosion. Why, it was monomania! If he were not mad, he ought to be!

One day, a month after Hemmings's departure, Pippin rose early from dinner; his face was flushed, he had been drinking wine rather freely. "I won't be beaten this time," he said, as he passed Scorrier. The latter could hear him breathing hard in the next room; he looked in presently to say that he was going for a walk. Pippin gave him a kindly nod—he was writing.

It was a cool, still evening, under the gleam of innumerable stars swarming in clusters above the forests, forming bright hieroglyphics in the middle heavens, and showering over the dark harbour into the sea. Scorrier walked slowly, in good spirits, with the conviction that at last Pippin had broken the spell; a weight was lifted from his mind, so entangled had he become in that uncanny question of silence; to get the letter sent would be like the laying of a phantom, and the rehabilitation of his own common-sense, for he had begun with acute uneasiness to suspect himself of sentimentality. Now that this silence was in the throes of being broken, he felt curiously tender towards Pippin, without the old hero worship, but with a protecting emotion. After all, he was different from any other man; in spite of that feverish and tenacious energy,

in spite of that ironical humour, there was something of the woman about him! And as for this silence, this horror of control—all geniuses had a "bee in their bonnets," and Pippin was a bit of a genius!

He looked back at the town. Brilliantly lighted, it had a thriving air—difficult to believe of the place he remembered ten years back; the civilised sounds of drinking, gambling, laughter, and dancing floated up to his ears. "Quite a city!" he thought. He had a mood of intoxicated optimism on him which sometimes invades the most sober-minded, when nothing seems more improbable than defeat; when shadows are melted by the mysterious, enchanted halo of self-assertion. Everything was for the best! . . . He walked slowly back down the street, forgetting that he was simply an oldish mining-expert, with a look of permanent shabbiness, such as clings to men who are always travelling, as if their "nap" were for ever being rubbed off. As the lights shone in his eyes he thought of Pippin, the creator of all this glory. It was a shock to find himself among the woods, walking along a track, with the smell of rotting wood in his nostrils. A feeling of discouragement instantly beset him. The scents and silence, after the festive cries and odours of the town, were undefinably oppressive. Notwithstanding, he walked a long time, saying to himself that he would give the letter every chance. At last,

when he thought that Pippin must have finished, he returned to the house.

Pippin *had* finished. His forehead rested on the table, his arms hung at his sides; he was stone-dead! His face wore a smile, and by his side lay an empty bottle of laudanum.

The letter, closely and beautifully written, was signed. A fine document, clear, masterly, and detailed, with nothing slurred, nothing concealed, nothing omitted; a complete review of the Company's position; it ended with the words—

"Your humble servant,
RICHARD PIPPIN."

Scorrier took possession of it. He understood dimly that with those last words a wire had snapped. The border-line had been overpassed; the point reached where the sense of proportion, which alone makes life possible, is lost. He was certain that at the moment of his death Pippin could have discussed with him bimetallism, or any intricate problem, except the one problem of his own heart; *that*, for some mysterious reason, had been too much for him. His death had been the work of a single instant's supreme revolt—a single instant of madness on a single subject! He found on the blotting-paper, scrawled across the impress of the signature, the words, "I can't stand it!" The completion of his letter had symbolised to him

something ungraspable by Scorrier. Slavery? defeat? a violation of Nature? the death of justice? It was better not to think about it! Pippin could have told—but he would never speak now. Nature, at whom, unaided, he had dealt so many blows, had taken her revenge! . . .

In the night he stole down, and, with an ashamed face, cut off a lock of the fine grey hair. "His daughter might like it!" he thought. . . .

He waited till Pippin was buried, then, with the letter in his pocket, started for England.

He arrived at Liverpool on a Thursday morning, and travelling to town, drove straight to the offices of the New Colliery Company. The board were sitting. Pippin's successor was being interviewed. He passed out as Scorrier came in, a middle-aged man with a large, reddish-grey beard, and a foxy face full of compromise. He also was a Cornishman. Scorrier wished him luck with a heavy heart.

As a commonplace man, who had a proper horror of emotion, whose living depended on his good sense, to look back on that interview with the board was painful. It had excited in him a rage of which he was now heartily ashamed. Every one had risen, shaken hands with him, and expressed themselves indebted to him for coming. From behind the perfectly sincere concern upon their visages an air of stealthy festivity peeped

forth. Each one might have been repeating to himself, "Now the cat's away." Scorrier placed Pippin's letter on the table, and gravely the secretary read out to his board the last words of their superintendent. When he had finished a director said, "That's not the letter of a madman!" Another answered, "As mad as a hatter; nobody but a madman would have thrown up such a position." Scorrier suddenly withdrew, and left them to discuss the question of Pippin's sanity. He heard Hemmings's voice calling over the stairs to him, "Aren't you well, Mr Scorrier? aren't you well, sir?"

He shouted back, "Quite well, thank you." . . .

The "express" rolled round the outskirts of Naples. Vesuvius shone in the sun, uncrowned by smoke. But even as Scorrier looked, a white puff went soaring up into the blue. It was the footnote to his memories.

A KNIGHT

A KNIGHT.

I.

IN the spring of the year 189–, at Monte Carlo, I used to notice an old fellow in a grey suit and sunburnt straw hat with a black ribbon. Every morning at eleven o'clock, followed by a brindled "Great Dane," he would come down into the *Place*, walk once or twice round it, and seat himself on a bench facing the casino. There he would remain in the sun, with his straw hat tilted forward, his thin legs apart, his brown hands crossed between them, and the dog's nose resting on one of his knees. After an hour or more he would get up, and, stooping a little from the waist, as if he had a kink in his back, walk slowly round the *Place* and return up the hill.

In the afternoon, just before three, he would

come down again in the same clothes and go into the casino, leaving the dog outside. One afternoon I had the curiosity to follow. He passed through the hall without a look at the gambling-rooms, and went to the concert. I got into the habit of watching for him. When he sat in the *Place* I could see him from the window of my room. The chief puzzle was the matter of his nationality. One can generally tell a man's nationality, but now and then comes some one utterly unreadable. Once at Coblentz I sat next to a man at *table d'hôte*. The meal lasted nearly two hours, and we talked all the time, but at the end I had no more notion of his nationality than at the beginning. He spoke good English, talked of deer-stalking in Scotland, related an incident about a hare which showed contempt of foreign sport, yet was not an Englishman. He spoke very good French, but was not a Frenchman. He seemed too "limber" for a German, and he was no Russian, for he mentioned a Russian political scheme with derision, which, whatever his politics, a Muscovite would never do to a foreigner. Certainly he was neither Spaniard, Portugee, nor Scandinavian. I was reduced to cataloguing him North Italian, Roumanian, Basque, or French Canadian. He was a mystery!

It was the same with this old fellow. His lean, rather short face had a burnt skin that looked like dried leather, a long, prominent jaw, pointed chin,

and two holes in the cheeks, as if he were continually sucking them in. There were wrinkles across his forehead; his eyes were brown; and little white moustaches were brushed up from the corners of his lips. The back of his head bulged sharply out above the lines of his lean neck and high shoulders; his grey hair was cropped close. In the Marseilles buffet, on the journey out, I had met an Englishman, almost his counterpart in features—but how different! About this old fellow there was an absolute lack of the other's alert, practical, autocratic self-sufficiency. He was quiet and undemonstrative, but not rounded off—insulated against shocks and foreign substances, so to speak. He was certainly not a Frenchman. His eyes, indeed, were brown, but hazel-brown, and gentle—not a Frenchman's lively, red-brown, sensual eyes. An American? Was ever an American so passive? German? His moustache was brushed up, but in a modest, pathetic way, that had nothing in common with the frank, brutal assertion of the German moustachio. Nothing seemed to fit him quite. I gave him up at last, and used to think of him as the "Cosmopolitan."

At the end of April I left and forgot all about him. In the same month of the following year I was again at Monte Carlo, and going one afternoon to a concert found myself next to this same old fellow. The orchestra was playing something of Meyerbeer's.

My neighbur was asleep, snoring very softly. He was dressed in the same old grey suit, with the same old straw hat (or one exactly like it) on his knees, and his hands crossed above it. He was not in the least disfigured by sleep—little white moustaches still brushed up, his lips closed below them; something extraordinarily gentle and good hovered about his face. There was a curved mark on his right temple, the scar of a cut on the right side of his neck, and his left hand was covered by an old glove, the little finger of which was empty. The clatter of the music had no effect on his slumber, but he woke when it was over and brisked up his moustache.

The next thing on the programme was a little thing by Poise out of "Le joli Gilles," a violin solo—with those quaint intervals that give tugs at one's heart. I glanced at my neighbour; a tear was caught in the hollow of his cheek, another leaving the corner of his eye; he seemed unconscious of them, there was a faint smile on his lips. It was then the "interval," and while the orchestra and audience were slipping out of their seats I was trying to make up my mind to begin a conversation. It is difficult when one has had a person under observation for so long without his being aware of one's existence. At last I asked if he were fond of music. He looked up without the slightest distrust, bowed, and answered in a thin, gentle voice,

"Certainly. I know nothing about it, play no instrument, never could sing a note; but—fond of it! Who would not be?" His English was all right, with an emphasis neither quite American nor quite foreign. I ventured to remark that he did not care for Meyerbeer. He smiled.

"Ah!" he said, "I was asleep? Too bad of me. Well, you know—he *is* a little noisy sometimes—I know so little about music. There is Bach, for instance. Would you believe it, he gives me no pleasure? A great misfortune to be no musician!" He shook his head.

I murmured, "Bach—education—elevating!"

"To me," he answered, "any music I *like* is elevating. People say some music has a bad effect on them. I never found any music that gave me a bad thought—no—no—quite the opposite; only sometimes, as you see, I go to sleep. But what a lovely instrument the violin!" A faint flush came up in his parched cheeks. "I can believe it to be the human soul that has got away from the body. It's a curious thing," he went on, "very distant bugles at night have given me the same feeling." The orchestra had begun to resume their places, and folding his hands, my neighbour turned his eyes towards them. When the concert was over we went out together. Waiting at the entrance was the dog I had seen the last year.

"You have a beautiful dog!"

"Ah! a great friend. *Freda, mia cara, da su mano!*" The dog squatted on its haunches and lifted a hand, pawing at the air in the vague, bored way of big dogs when requested to do a civility; a beauty she was—the purest brindle, without any speck of white, and free from the unbalanced look of many "great Danes."

"*Basta! basta!*" He turned to me apologetically. "It's a convention between us to speak Italian; in that way I keep up the language; astonishing the number of things one can say to a dog!" I was taking my leave, when he asked if I would walk a little way with him—"If you are quite free, that is." We went up the street with Freda on the far side of her master.

"Do you never 'play' here?" I asked him.

"Play? No. It must be very interesting; most exciting, no doubt, but, you know, as a matter of fact, I can't afford it. If one has very little, one is bound to be nervous."

At that moment old Hodgkin, escorting two ladies—when was he ever without them?—bored into us, flourishing his nose and his huge feet, for all the world like a rhinoceros in spectacles.

"Ha!" he snorted at my companion, "trying to avoid me, sir—trying to avoid me! Come to lunch to-morrow. Shouldn't try to avoid John Hodgkin—it don't pay, sir!" On he went, leaving my companion standing with one hand clapped to his back

and the other raising his old straw hat a few inches from his head. He sighed, and said, "A good-hearted man—most hospitable," then smiled. "Do you know, I find him a little tiring—a shame to say that, when a man is so kind."

He had stopped in front of a small hairdresser's shop. "I live here," he said, raising his hat. "*Au revoir!*—unless I can offer you a glass of tea. It's all ready upstairs. Come! a hot afternoon; I have brought you out of your way; won't you give me the pleasure?"

I never met a man so free from self-consciousness, yet so delicate and diffident in his manner—a rare combination. We went up the uncarpeted stairway to a room on the second floor. My companion threw open the shutters and set a number of flies buzzing. The top of a plane-tree was on a level with the window, and all its little brown balls danced about, quite close, in the wind. As he had promised, an urn was hissing on a table; there was also a small earthenware teapot, some sugar, slices of lemon, and a glass. A bed, washstand, cupboard, tin trunk, two chairs, and a small piece of rug was all the furniture of the room. Over the bed a sword in a leather case was suspended from two nails. A single photograph of a girl stood on the closed stove. My host went to the cupboard and produced another glass, a second spoon, and a bottle. When he uncorked it a powerful odour of

rum escaped into the air. He sniffed and dropped a teaspoonful of the rum into both glasses.

"I learnt this after Plevna from the Russians; they had a little finger of mine, to be sure, but I got this in exchange." He looked round; his eyes and all the lines of his face seemed to twinkle. "I assure you it was worth it—makes all the difference. Try it, to please me?" He poured off the tea.

"Plevna? Had you such a great sympathy for the Turks?"

"The sympathy one has for the weaker side." He paused abruptly, then added, "It was not that." Innumerable crow's-feet had suddenly appeared on his face, one of his eyes began twitching; he went on hurriedly, "I had to find something to do just then—it was necessary." He stared into his glass, and it was some time before I ventured to speak. I asked him at last if he had seen much fighting.

"Yes," he replied gravely, "nearly twenty years altogether, off and on; I was one of Garibaldi's *Mille* in '60."

"But you are not an Italian?"

He leaned forward, with his hands on his knees. "I was in Genoa at that time learning banking; Garibaldi was a wonderful man! One could not help it." He spoke simply. "You might say it was like seeing a little man stand up to three or four

hulking fellows; I went, just as you would have done. I wasn't long with them—our war began, I had to go." He said this as if there had been but one war since the beginning of the world, and I must know which he meant. "In '61," he mused, "till '65. Just think of it! The poor country. Why, in my State, South Carolina——" He broke off with a despairing gesture. "I was through it all—nobody could be spared there—we were one to three."

So he was an American!

"I suppose you have a love of fighting?"

"Love of it! love of it!" he repeated, as if considering the idea for the first time. "Sometimes I fought for a living, and sometimes—because I was obliged; one must try to be a gentleman. But won't you have some more tea?"

I refused the tea and took my departure, carrying with me a picture of the old fellow looking down from the top of the stairs, one hand pressed to his back, the other twisting up those little white moustaches, and murmuring, "Take care, my dear sir, take care, there's a step at the corner."

"To be a gentleman!" I remarked in the street, causing an old French lady to drop her parasol, so that for about two minutes we stood bowing and smiling to each other, then separated full of good-will.

II.

A WEEK later I found myself again sitting next him at a concert. In the mean time I had seen him now and then, but only in passing. He greeted me with his quiet cordiality, but seemed depressed. It had been a wet morning — wet enough to damp any one's spirits; certainly he appeared like a man with some shadow on him; there was a tightening about the corners of his lips, a grey hue in the tan of his cheeks, a restless look in his eyes; and, between two numbers of the programme, he said with a smile, tapping his fingers on his straw hat, "Do you ever have bad days? Yes? Ah! I'm sorry; not pleasant, are they?"

In the interval something occurred from which all that I have to tell you followed. There came into the concert-hall a woman—the heroine of one of those romances, crimes, follies, irregularities, call it what you will, which carry with them the eye of the world. She passed us accompanied by the man, and sat down in a chair a few rows to our right. She kept turning her head and whispering to him, and at every turn I could catch the uneasy

gleam of her eyes. Some evil, or commonplace spirit—much the same thing—made me say to my companion, "Pretty brazen! But look at her eyes!"

"Brazen! What is she to do?" The change in him was confusing. His lips were drawn back from his teeth; he frowned; the scar on his temple had reddened; his voice had a fiery impatience in it. I was suddenly impressed by the caddishness of my own remark, and hastened to tell him so.

"Ah!" he said, more quietly, "you only joined the hue and cry. It seems to me—it seems to me—but you wouldn't understand——" and he broke off. Gradually he regained his usual air of self-obliteration; he seemed ashamed, and was making attempts to brush up his moustaches higher than usual, as if aware that his heat had robbed them of a little of their neatness and decency.

"No, no! I'm not myself when I speak of such things,—I should worry you——" We were silent, and he employed himself in reading his programme, holding it carefully upside down. A minute later, however, he said in a strange voice, "There are people to be found who hold up their hands at the vivisection of animals; but the vivisection of a woman, who cares for that? Will you tell me, that for some accident, for some chance,—believe me, it is often chance" (he seemed to entreat)—"we should hunt down a woman? That her

fellow-women should make her an outcast? That we, who are *men*, should make a prey of her? If I thought that, I——" Again he broke off; his eyes glowed. "It is *we* who make them what they are; and even if that is not so—why! if I thought there was a woman in the world I could not take off my hat to—I—I—couldn't sleep at night." He got up from his seat, put on his old straw hat with trembling fingers, and, without a glance at me, went out, stumbling a little over the chair-legs.

I sat there, horribly disturbed; the words, "One must try to be a gentleman!" kept reproaching me. When I came out, he was standing by the entrance with one hand on his hip and the other on his dog's head. He did not see me. In that attitude of waiting he made a sufficiently patient figure; the sun glared down and showed the threadbare nature of his clothes and the thinness of his brown hands, with their long fingers and nails yellow from tobacco. As soon as he noticed me he came up the steps and raised his hat.

"I am so glad to have caught you; please forget all about that——" He made a gesture. I asked if he would do me the honour of dining at my hotel.

"Dine?" he repeated, with the sort of smile a child gives you if you offer him a box of soldiers; "with great pleasure. I seldom dine out, but I

think I can scare up a coat" (the first time he had made use of an Americanism). "Yes—yes—and at what time would you like me to come? At half-past six, and your hotel is the ——? Good! I shall be there. *Freda, mia cara, sarai sola 'sta sera* (you will be alone to-night). You do not smoke *caporal*, I fear. I find it fairly good—fairly good; 'needs must,' you know. It has a bite with it; but what are you to do?" He walked off with Freda, puffing jauntily at his thin roll of *caporal*, in great spirits. Yet once or twice he stopped and put his hand to his brow, as if bewildered or beset by some sudden doubt or memory; and every time he stopped like that, out lolled Freda's tongue to lick his other hand. They disappeared round the corner of the street, and I went to my hotel to prepare the banquet. On the way I met Jules le Ferrier, and asked him to come too.

"My faith, yes!" he said, with the rosy cheerfulness and verbal cynicism that, I fancy, must come from editing a French journal. "Man must dine; but, my dear, avoid whitebait — fried fat, fried fat!"

At half-past six we assembled. My "Cosmopolitan" in an old frock-coat with braid round the edges, buttoned high and tight, defining more than ever the sharp lines of his shoulders and the slight kink in his back; he had brought

with him a dark-peaked cap of military shape, which he had evidently selected as more fitting to the coat than a straw hat. He smelled slightly of some herb. Jules was in the glory of full evening dress. I confess watching for the old fellow from the bedroom window, and compromising accordingly. At bottom Jules has the best of hearts, otherwise one might have been nervous. We sat down to dinner, and did not rise for two hours. He was a charming guest, the old fellow; ate everything and praised it—not in a commonplace way, but in words that made you feel it had given him a real pleasure. At first, whenever Jules made one of his caustic remarks, he looked quite pained, but suddenly seemed to make up his mind that it was all bark and no bite; and then at each of them he would turn to me and say, "Aha! that's good—isn't it?" With every glass of champagne he became more gentle and more genial, sitting upright and tightly buttoned all the time like a wooden soldier; the little white wings of his moustaches seemed continually in danger of leaving him altogether for a better world.

He would not talk about himself. We came to putting leading questions, for even the cynicism of Jules had recognised that here was some one with a history: he only answered them with gentle precision, and sat brushing up his moustaches perfectly

unconscious that there was anything more to be said. Short of asking for the story of his life, which in his politeness he would have attempted, there was nothing to be done; after all, he was enjoying himself—to the very tips of his yellow, carefully-kept finger-nails. Doubtless the wine went a little to his head, his thin, high voice grew a trifle thinner and a trifle higher, his cheeks a little flushed, his eyes a little brighter; at the end of dinner he said to me, "I am not accustomed to wine—I hope I have not been noisy."

When we assured him he had not been noisy enough, he twinkled and answered, "Come, come, you're laughing at me. Surely I've been talking all the time."

"*Mon Dieu!*" said Jules, "we have been looking for some fables of your wars; but nothing—nothing, not enough to feed a frog!"

The old fellow looked serious, a little troubled, as if he had made a hole in his manners.

"To be sure!" he mused. "Let me think! there is that about Colhoun at Gettysburg; and there's the story of Garibaldi and that rascal the Miller." He plunged into a tale that had nothing to do with himself, and would have been dull enough if it had not been for the conviction in his eyes, the way he stopped and commented to himself, "That was fine!" "So you see," he concluded, "that's the sort of man Garibaldi was! I could tell you another

story about him. Let's see——" But catching an introspective look in Jules's eye, I hastened to propose that we should take our cigars to the Café de Paris.

"Delightful!" said the old fellow. "We shall have a band and the fresh air, and clear consciences for our cigars. I've never been able to like this smoking in a room where there are ladies perhaps still dining."

We sallied forth, after I had seen, to my chagrin, a franc pass between him and the waiter, who brought his cap.

He walked a step or so in front, drawing away with great enjoyment at his cigar, which, if like mine, was certainly not a good one. Jules, his face glowing above the candour of his shirt and waistcoat, and all his teeth visible, whispered to me, "How he is good!" then sighed, and added darkly, "the poor man!"

We placed ourselves at a table on the outside of the verandah, where the branches of a plane-tree rustled faintly above our heads; electric light, like a silver liquid, played softly all round the leaves, which hung, lifeless, speckled like the breasts of birds, snow-white or black against the sky, till, caught by the breeze, they fluttered suddenly like little wings.

The old fellow sat with head tilted back, a smile on his face, descending now and then out of his

dreams to drink coffee, answer a question, or hum over the air the band had just been playing. The ash of his cigar grew longer and longer. One of those bizarre figures in oriental garb, who, night after night, offer stuffs of doubtful origin and great price, appeared suddenly in the white glare of a lamp, looked with a furtive smile at his upturned face, and glided away, somehow discomfited by its utter unconsciousness. Yes—a night for dreams! a faint, half-Eastern smell of black tobacco and spice! It was early—few people as yet at the little tables, the waiters leisurely, the band soft; even Jules melancholic, drinking *crême de menthe*. What was he dreaming of, that old fellow, whose cigar-ash grew longer and longer? Of youth, his battles, those things that must be done and left undone if one tries to be a gentleman; perhaps only of his dinner; anyway of something gilded — gilded in a tender, vague fashion as the light was gilding the leaves of the plane-tree.

Suddenly Jules pulled my sleeve and whispered, "He sleeps." It was true, he had smilingly dropped off into a light sleep; the cigar-ash—a feathery tower of his dreams—had broken and come down all over his trousers. He awoke in the same innocent, irresponsible way, and fell to carefully dusting them. He praised the extinct cigar, accepted another with a bow, and held it to his ear.

"You have never smoked green cigars?" he said;

"what a pity! I've smoked them in Cuba and Hungary — delicious!"

The little tables round us began to fill. One of the bandsmen was playing a czardas upon the *czymbal.* And then the thing happened! Two young Frenchmen, talking loudly, sat down at the adjoining table. My attention had been called off to something else; I was startled by the old fellow's saying distinctly, "*Messieurs,* your words are shameful in a public place!"

The elder of the two young men leant forward with exaggerated ease. "It is a bet; but there is the present man. I take three weeks, that's enough —*elle est declassée; ce n'est que le premier pas*——"

The old fellow's cigar fell on the table with a soft thud. "*Monsieur,*" he stammered, "you speak of a lady so?"

The young man stared at him. "Who is this funny person? A lady, indeed?"

My guest took up Jules's glove that lay on the table; before either of us could raise a finger he swung it into the speaker's face. "Enough!" he said, and, dropping the glove, walked away.

We all jumped to our feet. I left Jules and hurried after him. His fingers were busy with his moustache, his face grim, his eyes the eyes of a creature who has been wilfully struck on a raw place. He made an outward and downward

motion of his fingers which said plainly, "Be so good as to leave me!"

I stammered regrets and went back to the café. The two young men had disappeared; I could not see Jules, but everything else was going on just as before; the bandsman was still at the metallic monotony of his czardas; the waiters were serving drinks; one of the mysterious orientals instantly endeavoured to sell me a carpet. I paid the bill, sought out the manager, and made my apologies. He shrugged his shoulders, smiled, and remarked, "It is an eccentric, your friend?" Could he tell me where M. le Ferrier was? No; he could not. I left the café to look for Jules; did not succeed in finding him, and returned to my hotel disgusted with everything. Apart from the annoyance, I was sorry for the old fellow, but angry with him too; what business had he to carry his Quixotism to such unpleasant lengths? I tried to settle down to a book and forget it. Ten o'clock struck—eleven; the Casino disgorged a stream of people; half an hour followed, when the *Place* seemed fuller of life than ever, then subtly but quickly it grew empty and dark. The whim seized me to go out. It was a very still night, very warm, very black. On one of the seats a man and woman sat embraced, on another a woman was sobbing, on a third—strange sight—a priest dozing. I became aware of some

one at my side; it was my guest of the evening. He put his hand on my arm.

"If you are not too tired," he said, "can you give me ten minutes?"

"Certainly; will you come in?"

"No, no; let us go down to the Terrace. I shan't keep you long."

He did not speak again till we were at one of the seats overlooking the pigeon-shooting grounds, and there, in a darkness that was the denser for the string of lights still burning in the town, we sat down.

"I owe you an apology," he said; "first in the afternoon, then again this evening—your guest—your friend's glove, too! I have behaved as no gentleman should have behaved." He was leaning forward with his hands folded on the handle of a stick. His voice sounded broken and disturbed. It was painful.

"Oh! it's nothing," I muttered.

"You are very good," he sighed; "there is only one thing I can do—to speak of myself. I consider I owe this to you, but I must tell you I should not have the courage if it were not for another reason." He looked at me with an uncertain smile. I bowed, and a minute or two later he began. . . .

III.

"It was in '74. I had been ill with Cuban fever. To keep me alive they put me on board a ship at Santiago, and at the end of the voyage I found myself in London. I had very little money; I knew nobody. Now I tell you, sir, there are times when it is hard for a fighting-man to get anything to do, and yet it's astonishing how kind people are! Why, all that time my landlady never once asked me for rent! I found the same kindness when I was trying to get work. People would say, 'Once a fighting-man, always a fighting-man; afraid we've nothing you could do in our business. You are not looking well; we are sorry.' You could see they were really sorry. I tried a great many people, a great many kinds of things; but it was true—I'd been fighting here and there since '60, I wasn't fit for anything——" He shook his head. "In the South, before the war, they had a saying, 'A dog and a soldier.' . . . But all this has nothing to do with what I have to tell you." He sighed again and went on, moistening his lips with his tongue, "I was walking along the Strand one day, very

down and disheartened, when I heard my name called. 'Tis a queer thing, that, in a strange street. By the way," he put in with dry ceremony, "you don't know my name, I think: Brune — Roger Brune. Well, sir, I must tell you that at first I did not recognise him. He got off an omnibus—a man with square shoulders, heavy moustaches, and round spectacles. But when he shook my hand I saw it was Dalton, who was taken prisoner at Gettysburg; one of you Englishmen who came to fight with us—major in the regiment where I was captain. We were comrades for two campaigns, and if I had been his brother he couldn't have seemed more pleased to see me. He took me into a bar for the sake of old times. Sir, the drink went to my head; by the time we came to Trafalgar Square I was quite unable to walk. Well, he made me sit down on a bench. . . . I was drunk. It's a strange thing, I have never been so happy in my life as for the half hour we sat there. Very strange, I was never so happy, . . . and yet," he mused, "it's disgraceful to be drunk! Now I tell you, sir," he resumed, brushing up his moustaches, (all through his story he was always making use of that expression, "Now I tell you, sir"; it seemed to infuse fresh spirit into him, to help his memory in obscure places, to give him the mastery of his emotions; it was like a fixed spot that a nervous man keeps his eyes upon to help him through a

speech), "there never was a man born with a finer soul than my friend Dalton. He was not a very clever man, though he had read a great deal; and sometimes he was almost too fond of talking, though *I* have no right to say so. But, sir, he was a gentleman; he listened to me as if I had been a child; he was not ashamed of me, and, do you know, it takes a gentleman not to be ashamed of a drunken man in the middle of London, for God knows what things I said to him while we were sitting there! Well, he took me to his home and put me into his own bed; ten days and nights he nursed me—I was down again with the fever." He stopped, turned slightly away from me, and put his hand to his brow. "While I lay there—*she*—she came. . . . I am not a poet, sir, and I cannot tell you what she seemed to me. I was delirious, but I knew when she was there. I had dreams of sunshine and cornfields, of dances and waves at sea, and young trees —never the same dreams, never anything long together; and when I had my senses I was afraid to say so for fear she would go away. She'd be in the corner of the room, with the hair about her neck, all bright; she never worked and never read, but sat and talked to herself in a whisper, or looked at me for a long time together out of her blue eyes, a little frown between them, her upper lip closed firm on her lower lip, where there was an uneven tooth. And when her father came, out she'd jump and

hang to his neck till he groaned, then drop her arms and run away, but presently she would come stealing back on tiptoe and kiss the top of his head. I ask you, Who could help loving her? When I was getting well I used to listen for her footsteps on the stairs, then the knock, the door flung back or opened ever so quietly—you could never tell which; and her voice, with a little lisp, 'Are you better to-day? What funny things you say when you're delirious! When will you be able to tell me stories? Are you a general? Father says you've been in heaps of battles.'"

He got up, took a turn in the direction of the Casino, and seated himself again. "Every word I remember as if it were yesterday, all the things she said, all the things she did; I've had a long time to think over them. . . . Well, I must tell you, the very first morning that I was able to get up, I missed her. Dalton came in her place, and I asked him where she was. 'My dear fellow,' he answered, "I've sent Eilie away to her old nurse's inn on the river; she's better there at this time of year'; we looked at each other, and I saw he had sent her away because he didn't trust me. I had the presumption to be hurt. When you have been ill, I guess you get spoiled. I saw he was right, too, for all he knew about me in ten years was that I had got drunk; but that didn't prevent me being angry. I am a very quick-tempered man. I made up my

mind to leave him that very day. Well, I tried, but it was of no use—he had to put me back into bed again. The next morning he came and proposed that I should go into partnership with him. You know, sir, he kept a fencing-school and pistol-gallery. It seemed like the finger of God; and perhaps it was — who knows?" He fell into a reverie; asked permission to smoke, and taking out a cigarette of *caporal*, twiddled it unlighted in his fingers; he went on suddenly: "There, in the sitting-room above the school, we used to talk, one on each side of the grate—I remember it better than my room here—the second floor, two windows with a view of nothing but the houses opposite; cherries on the wall; a paraffin-lamp that *would* smell; and the furniture was covered with chintz. The things on the bookshelf were never disturbed, they were Eilie's — half-broken cases with butterflies, nearly all spoilt, a frog in a bottle, and a horse-shoe half-covered with tinfoil, some shells too, and a cardboard box without a lid with three speckled eggs, and written on the box, 'Missel thrush from Lucy's tree—second family, only one blown.'" He suddenly noticed the cigarette, lit it, and smoked fiercely, with puffs that were like sharp sighs.

"Dalton was wrapped up in her. He talked to me till I seemed to know every hair of her head, and I was never tired of hearing. We had a lot of pupils; hard work every way; and every evening

we sat there, after supper, smoking—and though, to be sure, we talked of other things, sooner or later it came round to her. Her bedroom opened out of the sitting-room; he took me in once and showed me a narrow little room the width of a passage, all fresh and white, with a photograph of her mother over the bed, and an empty basket for a dog or cat; sometimes, when Dalton was not there, I have stared at the door, but what?——" He broke off again with a vexed air, and resumed sternly, as if trying to bind himself to the narration of facts: "She was then fifteen—her mother had been dead twelve years — a beautiful face, her mother's; it was her death that sent Dalton to fight with us—the man that loses the woman he loves! . . . Well, sir, one day in August, when it was very hot, Dalton proposed a run into the country. The next morning we took the train. We arrived, and there, on the platform, was Eilie, in a sun-bonnet and a blue frock—light blue, her favourite colour. She had no greeting for me—her eyes were all for her father. I was angry with Dalton for not telling me we should see her; my clothes — my hair, too; you see, if I had only known, I could have had it cut. It was black then," he added fiercely, tracing a pattern in the darkness with his stick. "She had a little donkey in a cart; she drove it, and we walked one on each side; I recollect, too, the donkey had a bell. 'Dad,'

she said to Dalton, 'I got out before Lucy was ready, and harnessed Jerusalem. We'll meet her on the road. Lucy can't walk fast, she's too fat,' and under her hat she looked at me. I ought to tell you she never laughed — her eyes danced, her cheeks would go pink, and her hair shake all about on her neck, but she never laughed; sometimes her lips parted, you know, but she would soon snap them together again. We met Lucy, a very broad, good woman, in a black gown and a fine bonnet— how hot she was, poor thing! I have never seen anything like that inn: sweetbrier up to the roof! And the scent—sir, I am very susceptible to scents, it is a misfortune!" His head drooped, the cigarette fell out of his hand. A train passing beneath sent up a shower of sparks. He started and went on: "Well, we had our lunch in the parlour—I cannot tell you exactly what. A most interesting room, that, I assure you; there were quite a quantity of things to look at—a kettle-holder with a rhyme worked on it in red wool, I remember it well—

'The kettle must boil,
The water be hot,
Or a cup of good tea
Is not to be got.'

I am tedious; but, you see, I spent the happiest days of my life in that inn. On the opposite wall, too, was a print of Christian's travels, in the

'Pilgrim's Progress.' What a book, sir! and a picture called the Gypsy Queen — of a beautiful young woman playing on — now I don't wish to make fun — but it certainly seemed to be a footbath. . . . Afterwards we went into a meadow, and my friend Dalton fell asleep. A wonderful thing happened then. Eilie whispered to me, 'Let's have a jolly time.' She took me the most glorious walk. The river was close there. A lovely stream, your river Thames, so calm and broad; it is like the spirit of your people. I was bewitched; I forgot my friend, I thought of nothing but how to keep her all to myself."

Once again he rose, walked a few steps, and came back to his seat. "It was such a day — a day that shows something holy to a man. There are days that are the devil's, but that was one of God's. She took me to a little pond, under an elm-tree, and we dragged it, we two, an hour, for a kind of tiny red worm to feed some creature she had. We found them in the mud, and while she was bending over the curls got in her eyes; it was hot sun, but you couldn't tire Eilie. If you could have seen her then! She seemed like a first sight and scent of spring. . . . We had tea afterwards, all together, in the long grass over by some fruit trees. Ah, sir! I wish I had the use of words, there are things I could say——" He bent, as though in deference to the unspoken memories. "Twilight came on

while we were still sitting there. What a wonderful thing, twilight in the country! It was time for us to go. There was an avenue of trees close by —like a church with a golden window at the end, where the light came through—so high and solemn. Eilie beckoned to me. We walked up and down it. 'Why do you go away?' she whispered; 'will you come again?' Sir, her lips were trembling. Suddenly she lifted up her face, and there were tears in her eyes, and a frown too. My blood is hot, but I kissed her as she wanted to be kissed—like a little child. . . . Well, we said good-bye, and her eyes were looking at me all the while across her father's shoulder, innocent and loving, with a kind of surprise and sorrow in them. 'Why do you go away?' they seemed to be saying. . . . But I must tell you," he went on hurriedly, "of a thing that happened before we had gone a hundred yards. We were smoking our pipes, and I, sir, thinking of her, when out she sprang from the hedge and stood in front of us. Dalton cried out, 'What are you here for, you mad girl?' and she rushed and kissed him. I looked at her and she at me; her face was so different—careless, defiant, as one might say—it hurt me. She ran away. I couldn't understand. One is frightened of what one doesn't understand." . . .

IV.

"TIME went on. We became famous; men said there was no swordsman, or pistol-shot, like me in London; I guess that was not true, still we were able to increase our terms—it was the only part of my life when I have been able to make money. There was no time for spending; we gave lessons all day and in the evening were too tired. That year I had the misfortune to lose my dear mother. I became a rich man—yes, sir, at that time I must have had not less than £600 a-year.

"It was a long time before I saw Eilie again. She went abroad to Dresden with her father's sister to learn how to speak French and German. It was in the autumn of the year 1875 when she came back to us. She was seventeen then—a beautiful thing." He raised his cap, laid it on his knee, and seemed to forget it, for he went on bareheaded:—

"She was tall, as a young tree, with eyes like the sky. I would not tell you that she was perfect, for she had a little stoop, and she was thin, but her imperfections were beautiful too. What is it makes you love—ah! sir, I believe it is a very hidden and

mysterious thing. She had never lost that trick of closing her lips tightly when she remembered her uneven tooth. You may say it was vanity, but in a young girl do you tell me that is not a good thing?" He turned with a faint smile: "Which of us is not vain; 'old men and maidens, young men and children,' I, for one, am a very vain man. . . . Well, as I said, she came back to London to her little room, and in the evenings she was ready for us with tea. What a refreshing thing, tea! Meat and drink, after work, and before too. You mustn't suppose she was what is called housewifely; no, no, that would be wrong!" I could see him shaking his head; he murmured, "I could never admire housewifeliness, there is something in me—it's bad, I suppose—a fine quality, no doubt, still——" He sighed.

"No," he resumed with resolution, "Eilie was not like that, she was never quite the same two days together. I told you her eyes were like the sky—it is true of all of her. And yet at that time in one thing she seemed always the same—she had nothing but love for her father, and for me—well, I don't know what I should have expected! If I were in the room, she was very quiet; I used to catch her looking at me with a frown, and then, as if to make up to her own nature—a more loving nature never came into this world—she would go to her father and kiss him. When I talked with him she pre-

tended not to notice—sometimes if I turned I would see her looking stubborn and cold. I am not quick; it was a long time before I understood that she was jealous, she wanted him all to herself. Often I've wondered how she could be his daughter, for he was the very soul of justice and a slow man too, and she—as quick as a bird. A long time I saw her dislike, but, you know, if one doesn't wish to believe a thing, there are always reasons why it should not seem true, at least it is so with me, and I suppose with all selfish men.

"Well, I let it go; spending evening after evening there, when, if I had not thought only of myself. . . . But, sir, one day I could no longer be blind.

"It was a Sunday in February, with snow on the ground—Brrr! how hateful the cold is! I arrived at Dalton's, for I always had an invitation on Sundays to visit them for dinner in the middle of the day. There was no one in the sitting-room; the door of Eilie's bedroom was open. I have no excuse, I heard voices, and I listened. 'Eilie, Brune is coming.' 'That man, always that man!' . . . I didn't wait—I walked about all that day—it was the coldest of the whole year.

"For three weeks I kept away. I came to the school as usual, but not upstairs. I don't know what I told Dalton—it did not signify, for he was a man who always had a shrewd theory of his own,

and was persuaded of its truth—a most single-minded person.

"And now I come to the most wonderful days of my life. It was the end of March, an early spring that year, the buds already showing on the trees. I must tell you that I'd fallen away from my resolution, I would slink up—very seldom, it's true—and spend the evening with them as before. One day I came up to the sitting-room; the light was just failing—a warm evening and the windows open. In the air, sir, was that feeling which comes once a-year, no matter where you are, in a crowded street, or alone in a forest; only once—a feeling like the birth of all emotion; can you tell me how it comes or whence?

"Eilie was sitting with her chin on her hands. If you don't know, I can't tell you what it is in the spring-time to be near the woman one loves. . . . I stood looking at her. She was staring into the street, the back of her neck moving gently as she breathed. It seemed as though she might be looking for some one; at such times one does not ask oneself questions, one is dumb, one hardly breathes. She turned her head, her eyes were soft, a little startled; God knows, they seemed to ask me a question. I sat down, I wouldn't have spoken for all the world. It grew darker; we sat quite still; no one can make me believe there was not a spirit in the room passing between her and me. I can't

tell you what I felt, I dared not speak, or think, or even hope—I believe, that that was prayer. I have been in nineteen battles — several times too in positions of considerable gravity, when the lifting of a finger meant death ; but I have never felt what I felt at that moment. I knew something was coming ; I knew it, as I know that we are sitting on this bench. I was paralysed with terror lest it should not come, and my heart—ah!" He drew a long breath. . . .

"A man was lighting the street lamps, and I counted them, over and over again. The servant came in with a light—I couldn't stand that, I went away; but all night long I lay awake and thought of how she looked at me, the colour mounting slowly in her cheeks. I trembled and wondered. . . . It was three days before I found the courage to go again. I sat down to picquet with Dalton ; at once I felt her eyes on me—she was making a 'cat's cradle,' and they would steal up from her hands to my face. At last she gave up her string and went wandering round the room fingering at everything. Dalton called out, 'What's the matter with you, Eilie?' She dropped her hands and stared at him like a child caught doing wrong. I looked at her, she flushed, grew white, tried to look at me—sir, she could not ; a minute later she went away to her room. Dalton said, 'Is the child unwell?' God knows if I answered him—I was too

happy; have you ever been quite happy? I hope so. . . . I have no words to tell you of that time. Often and often Dalton said, 'Brune, what's come to the child? Nothing I can do pleases her—she's bewitched.' It was true; all the love she had given him was now for me; but he was too straightforward to see what was not intended for his eyes. How many times haven't I felt criminal towards him! but when you're happy, with the tide in your favour, you become a coward at once. . . . Listen!" He held up his hand: "One o'clock striking! Too bad, keeping you up—and yet——" I begged him to go on.

"You are sure? Well, I shan't be long now." He paused a minute with his eyes fixed on my face.

V.

"YES, sir, on her eighteenth birthday we were married. . . . First, I must tell you that for a long time Dalton was not aware of our love; it will always remain a wonder to me—the simple faith of his soul. But one day he came with a grave look on his face.

"'Brune,' he said, 'Eilie has told me. I forbid it. She's too young, and you—too old!' Sir, I was then forty-five, my hair as black and thick as—as a rook's feathers, and I was active—a strong, active man." In the darkness I saw his fingers brushing at the ends of his moustache. He went on sadly: "How do you think I answered him? 'We shall be married within a month!' We parted in anger. It was evening, a May night, and I walked out of London far into the country. When you are angry, go walking, there's no remedy so fine. Once I stopped—on a common, without a house or light near, and the stars like beautiful jewels above me. I was hot from walking, I could feel the blood in my veins—'Ah!' I said to myself, 'old, are you?' I threw up my head like a fool

and laughed. It was the thought of losing her—I wished to believe that I was angry, but it was really fear; fear and anger in me are very close together. A friend of mine, a poet, called them 'the black wings of self,' it's true enough! . . . The next morning I was sorry. I went to Dalton, I thought of what it meant to him. I am not a philosopher, but it has often seemed to me that no benefit can come to us in this life without an equal loss to other people, and yet does that stop our grasping? Sir, I think, not often. . . .

"We were married on the 30th of June 1876 at the parish church. No one was there but Dalton, Lucy, and Lucy's husband—such a big, red-faced man, with blue eyes and a golden beard parted into two; after the wedding he took Lucy away; it had been arranged that we should spend the honeymoon at their inn. Then my wife, Dalton, and I went to a restaurant for lunch. She was dressed in grey, the colour of a pigeon's feathers." He paused, leaning forward with his chin on the crutch of his stick. I tried to picture that young girl in her dress "the colour of a pigeon's feathers," with blue eyes and yellow hair, a little frown between her brows; the compressed red lips opening to say, "For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health"—I tried to imagine the sound of the words, high-pitched, with a little lisp. The old fellow's voice rose again: "At that time, sir, I was a

dandy. I remember I wore a blue frock-coat, with white trousers, and a grey top hat. Even now I should always prefer to be well-dressed. . . . What a lunch we had! We drank Veuve Clicquot, delicious—a wine you can't get in these days! Dalton came with us to the railway station. I cannot bear partings; and yet, they must come. . . . In the cool of the evening we walked out of the inn, under the aspen trees; their leaves seemed to me like a choir of birds full of praise at my good fortune. What should I remember in all my life if not that night—the young bullocks snuffling in the gateways—campion flowers all lighted up along the hedges — the moon with a halo, not the wicked sort, no, a fine-weather halo—bats, too, in and out among the stems, and the shadow of cottages as black and soft as that sea below us. We didn't talk—for a long time we stood on the river-bank beneath a lime-tree. The scent of the flowers! There is only room in a man's heart for a certain measure of joy"; in a whisper he added, "for a certain measure of sorrow"; and was silent a minute. "Lucy and her husband—did I tell you his name was Tor—Frank Tor—a man like an old Viking, and eating nothing but milk and bread and fruit—how good they were to us! The commissariat, indeed, was limited — eggs and bacon each morning for breakfast; for dinner a ham or roast pork—nearly always pig, sir, and, after all,

what can be nicer?" He meditated, then went on with alacrity:—

"But when we had a chicken or a duck, what a *fête* day! In our bedroom the sweetbrier grew right round the windows, the breeze would blow the leaves across the opening—'twas like a bath of perfume. I can't give you an idea of how clean everything was; the walls, too, were white, but there was only one picture—a remarkable sketch of some Scotch lake with cows in the foreground. What do you think some wag had written coming out of the mouth of the biggest cow? You'd never guess—'What, oh! we are the milky ones.' Even Eilie would laugh at that; if you think of it, it was extremely witty. She became as brown as a gipsy. I loved her; I don't think any man could have loved her more." He mused. . . . "There were times when my heart stood still; it didn't seem as if she understood how much I loved her." He suddenly laid his hand on mine as if to make his meaning plainer.

"It was not that she was cold; no, no!—she would rush into my arms, but the minute after she would run off, plucking the flowers or singing to herself. I remember one day her coaxing me to take her camping. We lazied down stream, she taking her turn with the sculls—she could row better than I. In the evening we pulled into the reeds under the willow-boughs and lit a fire for her

to cook by—though, as a matter of fact, nearly all our provisions were cooked already—but you know how it is; all the romance was in having a real fire. 'We won't pretend, will we?' she kept saying. While we were eating our supper a great hare came lolloping up to the clearing—how surprised he looked to see us! 'The tall hare,' Eilie called him. We sat by the ashes and watched the shadows; at last she roamed away from me. The time went very slowly; I got up to look for her. It was sundown. I called her name; it felt lonely! What can have become of her? I thought. I was frightened. It was a long time before I found her—and she was like a wild thing, hot and flushed, her pretty frock torn, her hands and face scratched, all her hair about her neck, like a beautiful creature of the woods, and chattering, sir, of her adventures. I was silent—I couldn't help it; if one loves, a little thing will scare one. I don't think that she noticed; but when we were back at the boat she threw her arms round my neck and cried, 'I won't ever leave you.' Before it was quite dark I crept into the boat, spread the bed, and put up the awning. Once in the night I woke and looked out—a water-hen was crying, and there in the moonlight a kingfisher flew across. The wonder on the river—the wonder of the moon and trees, the soft bright mist, the stillness! I cannot give you even a glimpse of my feelings. It was like another world, peaceful and

enchanted, far holier than ours. I will tell you, it seemed like the vision of the thoughts that come to one—how seldom! and which are gone, if one does but try to grasp them. Magic, sir! It wants a tongue of silver; a poet could tell you of it, but for me to try would not be right, for I think you will agree with me that poetry is something sacred." He was silent a minute, then went on in a high voice: "I looked at her, sleeping like a child, with her hair all loose, her lips apart, and I thought, 'God do so to me, if ever I bring her pain!' How was I to understand her? the mystery and innocence of her soul—the mystery and innocence of her soul!"

I tried to get a look at his face under the peak of the cap; except for the white line of the moustache it was black as ebony—I could tell nothing. He said quietly, "The river has had all light and all darkness, the happiest days, and the hours when I've despaired; and I like to think of it, for, you know, in time bitter memories fade, only the good remain. . . . Yet the good have their own pain, a different kind of pain, an aching, for we shall never get them back. Sir," he said, turning to me with a faint smile, "it's no use crying over spilt milk. . . . In the neighbourhood of Lucy's inn, the 'Rose and Maybush'—can you imagine a prettier name than that? I have been in many parts of the world, but nowhere have I found such pretty

names as in England. Why, they seem like the breath of the places themselves, as though, if I may say so, they came of their own accord; and I don't know if you've noticed how in your country every blade of grass, every flower that grows in the hedges, has a kind of pride about it from knowing it's sure to be looked after; every road and tree and cottage are at home—you might say they were certain they would live for ever. But I was going to tell you: Half a mile from the inn was a quiet old house of a long and solid shape, which we used to call the 'Convent'—they told us, indeed, it was a farm, but I can't say we saw any signs. Many afternoons we spent there, trespassing in the orchard—Eilie was fond of trespassing; if there were a long way round across somebody else's property, I guess she would take it. 'Suppose they come after us with whips or pitchforks!' she used to say; but they never did. No, sir, the most they would do was to give you good day. The last afternoon of all we spent in that orchard; we lay in the long grass—I recollect it was full of insects. I was reading for the first time 'Childe Harold'—a wonderful, a memorable poem! The bull fight—you remember:—

> "'Thrice sounds the clarion; lo! the signal falls,
> The din expands, and expectation mute'—

I had lost myself—a bad habit I have with a book. Suddenly Eilie said, 'Suppose I were to leave off

loving you?' It was just as if some one had leaned across the wall and flicked my face with a whip-lash. Did I answer? I don't know; I jumped to my feet. I ran to take her in my arms, but she slipped away; suddenly she turned, and began laughing softly. I laughed too — I don't know why." . . .

VI.

"The next day we went back to London; we lived in the top part of a house in the same street as the school, and about five days in the week Dalton would come and dine with us. He wouldn't come every day, for he was that kind of man who refuses to consult his own pleasure. We had more pupils than ever, and in my leisure I taught Eilie to fence. I have never seen any creature so lithe and quick; beautiful she looked in her fencing dress, with embroidered blue shoes.

"I was happy. When a man has obtained what he desires it's easy to become careless and self-satisfied; I was watchful, though, for I know that I'm naturally a selfish man. I studied to arrange my time and save money, to give her as much pleasure as I could. What she loved best in the world at that time was riding. I bought her a horse, and in the evenings of the spring and summer we rode together; but when it was too dark to go out late, she would ride alone, great distances, sometimes spend the whole day in the saddle, and come back so tired she could hardly

walk upstairs—I can't say I liked that. I used to be nervous, she was so headlong—but I didn't think it right to interfere with her liberty. I had a good deal of anxiety about money, for though I made more than ever, there never seemed any to spare. I was anxious to save—I hoped, I hoped—but we had no child, it was a trouble to me. She grew more and more beautiful, and I think she was happy. Has it ever struck you that each one of us lives on the edge of a volcano?—there is, I imagine, no one who has not some affection or interest so strong that beside it he counts the rest for nothing. Often, I suppose, a man lives his life through securely—it is not so with us all. I am far from complaining; what is—is." He pulled the cap lower over his eyes, and, clutching his hands firmly on the top of his stick, went on. He was like a man who rushes his horse at some almost insurmountable fence, unwilling to give himself time, from fear of "craning." "In the spring of '78 a new pupil came to me, a young man of twenty-one who was going into the army. I took a fancy to him, and did my best to make him a good swordsman; but there was in him a kind of utterly perverse and reckless nonchalance: for a few minutes one would make a great impression, and then an insolent carelessness would come upon him. 'Gilbert,' I would say, 'I guess if I were you I would be ashamed.' 'Mr Brune,' he would

answer, 'why should I be ashamed? I didn't make myself,' and he would beg me for a drink, or offer to toss me for sovereigns. Sir, God knows, I wish to do him justice, he had a heart—one day he drove up in a cab, and brought into the school his poor dog, it had been run over, and was dying. For half an hour he shut himself with its body into the bath-room, we could hear him sobbing like a child; he came out with his eyes all red, and cried, 'I know where to find the brute who drove over him, out of the way, let me go,' and off he rushed. He had beautiful eyes like an Italian's; a slight figure, not very tall; dark hair, a little dark line of moustache; and his lips were always a trifle apart—it was that, and his walk, and the way he would drop his eye-lids, that gave him a look of soft, proud recklessness. One day he came to the school after hours—he was never punctual; I used to say, 'Gilbert, you'll never make a soldier!' 'Oh!' he'd answer, 'that'll be all right when the time comes!' That was the very man, he believed in a kind of luck that was to do everything for him when the time came. Well, I was giving Eilie a fencing lesson, it was the first time they saw each other. After that day he came more often, sometimes stayed, and I took him home to dine with us. He was waiting for his commission; he had missed some formality, and lost his chance for six months. I won't deny, sir, that I was glad to welcome him; I thought it good

for my wife. Can there be anything more odious, he burst out, than such self-satisfied blindness? There are people who say, 'Poor man, his faith was so great!' I say it's not faith, but conceit! I was a fool—in this world one pays for folly. . . .

The summer came; and one Saturday, at the beginning of June, Eilie, I, and Gilbert—I don't wish to tell you his other name—went riding into the country. The night had been wet; there was no dust in the air, and presently the sun came out—a glorious day! We rode a long way. About seven o'clock we started to ride back—slowly, for it was still hot, and there was all the cool of the night before us. It was nine o'clock when we came to Richmond Park. A grand place, Richmond Park; and in that half-light wonderful, the deer moving so softly, you might almost think them spirits. We were silent too,—I have always found that great trees have that effect on me; when you are amongst them words seem so small. Eilie had talked but little all day. He rode beside her, whistling a tune called 'The Lorelei.' . . . Sir, who can say when changes come? Like a shift of the wind, as suddenly, all the old passes, the new is upon you. I am telling you of that change. Without a sign, without a warning, she put her horse into a gallop. 'What are you doing?' I shouted. She looked back with such a strange smile. In that moment he dashed past

me too. It was as if a demon had stung them both: over fallen logs they galloped, in and out of the trees, through the bracken, under low-hanging branches, up hill and down, like mad things. What could I do? I had to watch that madness—to watch! the hardest thing of all. My horse was not so fast. I too rode like a demon; but I fell farther and farther behind. I'm not a man who takes things quietly. When I came up with them at last I couldn't speak. They were riding slowly, the reins on the horses' necks, and looking at each other. There was love, shame, everything in their faces. We rode on. 'You should take care,' I said. Eilie turned her face to me. 'Care!' she said. 'Life is not all taking care!' From that moment my anger left me. I rode behind, as your grooms ride behind their mistresses. They were not talking. He had put his hand on her horse's mane—under my very eyes. It was like him; and yet I don't know that then he had anything in his heart. . . . Jealousy! Ah, what a debasing thing! There's no torture so ceaseless, so black. . . . In those minutes a hundred things came up in my mind—a hundred memories, true, untrue; what do I know? My soul was poisoned. There were moments when I tried to reason: 'It's absurd! Why do you think such things? It's unmanly. . . . Even if it's true, try to be a gentleman!' A gentleman! There have been times

when I've laughed at the word." He took a fiercer grip of his stick, and spoke faster, as if pouring his heart out into the night, and no more to a live listener than to the gravel beneath our feet. He still made use of his mechanical "sirs," his reflections, the little bits of parched and pathetic philosophy. . . . "I could not have slept that night. To lie near her with those thoughts in my brain! No! I made an excuse, and sat up over some papers,—I don't know what they were about; in the morning I fell asleep. I woke while it was still early, and walked into St James's Park. The hardest thing in life is to see a thing coming and do nothing to prevent it. I asked myself what I could do, what she would do? Have you noticed how people may become utter strangers without a word spoken? It only needs a thought. . . . That day she said, 'I wish to go to Lucy's.' 'Alone?' 'Yes.' Sir, I had made up my mind that she must do as she wished. Perhaps I acted wrongly; I do not know what one ought to do in such a case. Just before she went I said, 'Eilie, what is it?' 'I don't know,' she said; and I kissed her—that was all. . . . Nearly a month passed; twice only I heard from her—short letters, telling me nothing of herself. And Dalton was a torture to me, for I could not tell him; besides, he had a conviction that she was to become a mother. 'Ah, Brune!' he would say, 'my poor wife was just like that.' Life, sir, an ironical

business! . . . *He*—forgive me, it's hard to say his name — he came to the school two or three times a-week. I used to think I saw a change, a purpose growing up through his recklessness; it may have been fancy, but, when we fenced together, there seemed a violence in him as if he chafed against my blade. I had a kind of joy in feeling I had the mastery, was only playing with him, could have tossed the iron out of his hand any minute like a straw. I was ashamed, and yet I gloried in it. Jealousy, it's a low, low thing! He asked me where Eilie was, and I told him; I was too proud to hide it. After that he didn't come. It tore me to think that he might be with her. . . . One morning, when I could no longer bear it, I wrote. I said I was coming down. I would not force myself on her, but I asked her to meet me in the orchard of the old house we called the Convent. I told her the time of my train; I asked her to be there at four o'clock. Sir, I hold that a man must not pray to a woman. He need not; women are generous—what they can give you they will. I sealed my letter, and went to the General Post Office to post it. I was afraid to give time for an answer. The next morning I went out early, and walked about until the time for my train. All the way down I kept on saying to myself, 'She must come—surely she will come!'"

VII.

"I WAS in high spirits, and the next moment trembled like a man with ague. I reached the orchard before the time. She wasn't there. Do you know what it is to wait? I stood still and listened, went to the point whence I could see farthest; said to myself, 'A watched pot never boils; if I don't look for her, she will come.' I walked up and down with my eyes on the ground, but now and then I looked—nothing! The sickness of it! A hundred times I took out my watch. Perhaps it was fast, perhaps hers slow—I can't tell you a thousandth part of my hopes and fears. For a long while I stood without moving. There was a spring of water in one corner. I sat beside it for company, and thought of the last time I had been there—something seemed to burst in my heart. It was five before all my hope was gone; there comes a time when you're glad that hope is dead, it means rest. 'That's over,' you say, 'now I can act.' But *I* couldn't, what was I to do? I lay down with my face to the ground: when one's in trouble, it's the

only thing to help—something to press against and cling to that can't give way; there's comfort in it. For two hours I lay there, all the time knowing I should play the coward in the end. At seven o'clock I left the orchard and went towards the inn; I'd broken my word, but I felt happy. I should see her; and, sir, nothing—nothing else seemed to matter. At the end of the garden Tor was snipping at his roses. He came up, but he couldn't look me in the face. 'Where's my wife?' I said. He answered, 'Let's get Lucy.' I ran indoors. Lucy met me with two letters; the first—my own—unopened; and the second, this:—

'I have left you. You were good to me, but now—it is no use. EILIE.'

Well, a man should be brave! . . . Lucy was crying; and that helped. She told me a boy had brought a letter for Eilie the day before, from a young gentleman in a boat. When Lucy gave it she said, 'Who is he, Miss Eilie? What will Mr Brune say?' My wife looked at Lucy angrily, but gave no answer—and all that day she never spoke. In the evening she was gone, leaving this note on the bed. . . . Lucy cried as if her heart would break. I took her by the shoulders and put her out of the room; you understand, I couldn't bear the noise. I sat down and tried to think. While I was sitting there Tor came and put a letter into my hand. It was written

on the notepaper of an inn twelve miles up the river; these were the words:—

"'Eilie is mine. I am ready to meet you anywhere.'"

He recited them without a trace of emotion—and went on with the same painful evenness of speech: "Sir, you know how a flame leaps out, so all the fury in my heart leaped out when I read these words. I had but one thought—to reach them—I left the house and ran down to the river. I chose the lightest boat. Just as I was starting, Tor came running. 'You dropped this,' he said; 'take me! Two pair of arms are better than one.' He came into the boat. I had the sculls, and I pulled out into the stream. I must have pulled like a madman, but I knew nothing; my heart thumped, my veins were bursting, my thoughts were swifter than my body—but I knew nothing; and that great man, with bare arms crossed, glowered at me under his linen hat—he seemed like a huge, tawny bull sitting there—I guess I was light-headed in my passion. Then I remember that he took my place, pulling great strokes, and I took the rudder lines. Nothing seemed real but the motion and the bank. All I wanted was to go faster. I watched his chest, covered with hair, heave up and down. 'Good!' I thought, and suddenly he growled out, 'By G—d, if 'twere Lucy!' It was growing dark, there was

no moon, I could barely see the bank, and there's something in the dark which drives one back into oneself—there's no help then from things outside, no help—you're alone then, you have to drink the very dregs. People tell you there comes a moment when your nature is decided—saved they call it—once for all. That's not true, your self is always with you; but, sir, I believe that in a time of agony one finds out what are the things one can do, and what are those one cannot. You get to *know* yourself, that's all. So it was with me. The darkness round was like a lamp; every thought, memory, and passion was clear and strong; and there were many of them! D'you think I didn't want to kill him? D'you think I did not want to kill myself? But her—no! only for a moment in my agony. The words of the Service—'to have and to hold till death do us part!' She was mine—that was strange! We are taught that we possess our wives, body and soul, we are brought up in that faith, we are commanded to believe it—but when you are at the last gasp those words have no meaning, no meaning; those words, that belief, those commands, they were without meaning to me, they were—vile. D'you think I did not want to find some comfort out of them, something to hold on to?—I repeat, they seemed to me vile. You may force a body; how can you force a soul? How awful, how cowardly! But I wanted to—I would kill him and

force her to come back to me! And then, suddenly, I felt as if I were pressing right on the most secret nerve of my heart. I seemed to see her face, all white and quivering, as if I'd stamped my heel on it. Ah! . . . They say this world is ruled by force; it may be true—I know I have a weak spot in me. . . . I couldn't bear it, I jumped to my feet and shouted at Tor, 'Turn the boat round!' He looked up at me as if I were mad, and shook his head. I seized the boat-hook and raved at him; I called him fearful names. He got up, too, and glared at me quite close. 'Sir,' he said, 'I don't take a name from anybody.' 'You'll take it from me,' I shouted, 'turn the boat round, idiot, hound, fish!' . . . I have a terrible temper, a perfect curse to me. He seemed amazed, even frightened; he sat down suddenly and pulled the boat round. I fell on the seat, and hid my face. I believe the moon came up; there must have been a mist too, I know I was cold in the boat—deadly cold. In this life, sir, we cannot hide our faces—but it's wrong to suppose that by degrees the sharpness of wounds will not die. Some will have it that such wounds are mortal; it is not so. Time is merciful.

"In the early morning I went back to London. I had fever again—delirious. I didn't know enough then to wish for death; afterwards, I confess to you, I should have killed myself if I had not been used to arms—old friends, I suppose—I can't explain.

It was a very long time before I could leave my bed. Dalton nursed me through it; his moustache, his heavy, smooth moustache, grew perfectly white. We never mentioned her; what was the good? There were things to settle, the lawyer—sir, this was unspeakably distasteful to me. I told him it was to be as she wished; and he *would* come to me, the fellow—there, I don't want to be unkind. I wished him to say it was my fault, but he said—I remember him well—a long-faced man with cold smiles—he said, it was impossible, would be seen through, and talked of collusion. I don't understand these things, and what's more, I can't bear them.

"Two years later, when I had come back to London, after the Russo-Turkish war, I received a letter from her. I have it here; if you will permit me, I'll read it to you." He took from the inside of an old leather pocket-book an old, yellow sheet of paper, spread it carefully in his fingers, and struck a match. It was a weird affair, that letter, read by the flame of many wooden matches. The little disc of light hovering like a moth over the words seemed to give them life. They were alive enough! It flashed on me that all he had been saying went for nothing; it was only what *he* had thought and seen; but this letter was the girl, the very girl herself! I don't know what I ex-

pected; it was not what I got—I listened as to a revelation.

"'Do you think I repent? Why should I, when I couldn't help it? Is it any good saying you are sorry? People *say* they are sorry, when they would do the same thing again. You thought you knew all about me, but you never could. Sometimes I don't know myself. Do you hate me? It can't be helped. If you hadn't ridden after us in Richmond Park, perhaps nothing would have happened. Why did you come into the room that time in the dark when it was spring? Why did you marry me? . . . Don't read my letter! I only write because I'm alone. Gyp's asleep. I've been alone all day—I keep thinking of so many things. Do you remember the "convent," and the "wishing" trees—the aspens; oh! and the night we camped on the river?'" . . . He read on steadily: "'People are always whispering about me—just as if I were worth it! They don't like me in their homes, at least only when it doesn't *matter*. Last night I heard two women talking; one said, "Don't you know? oh! yes—divorced—so young, pity, isn't it?" and the other put up her eyeglasses. I sat down next them, I wanted them to see I'd heard. I don't care—I've got Gyp. Isn't it a funny name, like a dog's? I was very ill; I thought I should die, and she would be quite a gipsy. She is

awfully pretty, and sweet, with black eyes and hair. Sometimes I cry; but, after all, I brought her into the world, and that must count. Everybody wants to be alive. We are never long in any particular place; last year we were a great deal at Monte Carlo, and in the autumn we went to Homburg; that didn't do at all, there was no gambling, and people were so "select." I don't know where we shall live—Gyp isn't well in hot places—I must have my way for her, or I don't know what will happen. Nobody could love anything as much as I love her. You can't think how beautiful her feet are, so round and soft, with the tiniest, tiniest pink toes. Do you think me a beast for writing? I write to father, and he answers my letters.'" . . . Then, as though she had been interrupted, it ended, unsigned.

He refolded and returned it to his pocket. . . .

So this was the girl; the adored! This limited being, always following her own little thoughts, without a touch of sympathy, breadth, or understanding.

Loving, he had called her! Yes, with a current of love as narrow and headlong as a mountain stream. I stole a look at him. Once in a way a man lives with an illusion all his life, hugs it, unconscious, curiously blind: all of a sudden something happens—we, the onlookers, see; but he—not a muscle of his face moves—he lives on with it,

a man in the dark. The shock is all for us. . . . For some minutes he sat without speaking. "It seems," he said at last, "we killed her between us. In the autumn of that year she died—eleven years ago—if she had lived she would have been thirty next June; not a great age. . . . I know I am what they call a crank; doctors will tell you that you can't be cured of a bad illness and yet be the same man again. If you are bent, to force yourself straight must leave you weak in another place. I *must* think well of women—everything done, everything said against them is a stone on her dead body. I ask you, Could *you* sit down and listen?" and as though driven by his own question, he rose, and paced up and down. When at length he came back to our seat he was smoking. I put my hand on his arm.

"Ah!" he said, "you are kind. I wanted to tell you," he hesitated a moment, then went on: "the little one — Lucy has her. My friend Dalton is dead; of course there would have been no difficulty about money, but, I am sorry to say, he was swindled—disgracefully swindled. It fell to me to administer his affairs—sir, he died penniless; not that he knew it; I have told you, he was not that kind of man, he trusted these fellows—had an idea they would make his fortune. Well, as I very soon found out, they had ruined him. You will understand it was impossible to let Lucy—such a dear

woman—bear that burden. I have tried to make provision; but you see," he took an apologetic hold of my sleeve, "I, too, have not been very fortunate, and, in fact, it's difficult to save a great deal out of £190 a-year; but the capital is perfectly safe, perfectly safe—£47, 10s. a-quarter, paid on the nail. I have often been tempted to reinvest at a greater rate of interest, but I've never dared. Anyway, there are no debts—I was obliged to make a rule never to buy anything I couldn't pay for on the spot—very hard, sir, that." I could see his features dimly distorted in a grimace. He said wistfully: "Now I am really plaguing you—but I wanted to tell you — in case——" He seemed to take a sudden scare, stiffened, twisted fiercely at his moustache, and muttering, "Your great kindness! Thank you—shall never forget!" turned hurriedly away.

He vanished; his footsteps and the tap of his stick grew fainter and fainter. I sat listening—they died away. He was really gone. Suddenly I got up and hastened after him. I soon stopped—after all, what was there to say?

VIII.

The following day I was obliged to go over to Nice, and did not get back till nearly midnight. The hotel porter told me that Jules le Ferrier had been to see me. The next morning, while I was still in bed, the door was opened, and Jules appeared. His face was extremely pale, his coat closely buttoned; the moment he stood still drops of perspiration began coursing down his cheeks.

"Well!" he said, "he is dead. There, there! Don't open your mouth. Ah! How stupid you look! My man is packing. I've half an hour before the train; my evidence shall come from Italy. I have done my part, the rest is for you. Why did you have that dinner? The Don Quixote! The idiot! the *poor* man! Don't move! Have you a cigar for me? Listen! When you followed him, I followed the other two. My infernal curiosity! Can you conceive a greater folly? I should have jumped into a bath and stayed there a week, and no one could have pestered me. How fast they walked, those two! feeling their cheeks, both of them, as if he had

struck them both, you know; my faith! it was funny. They soon saw me, for their eyes were all round their heads; they had the mark of a glove on their cheeks. I tell you, they were like monkeys on a stick." The colour began to come back into his face; he gesticulated with his cigar and became dramatic. "They waited for me: '*Tiens!*' said one, 'this gentleman was with him.' He came up to me. 'My friend's name,' he said, 'is M. le Baron de ——. The man who struck him was an odd-looking person; kindly inform me whether it is possible for my friend to meet him?' Eh!" commented Jules, "you see he was offensive! Was it for me to give our dignity away? 'Perfectly, monsieur!' I answered. 'In that case,' he said, 'please give me his name and address.' . . . I understood that I had mounted. I could not remember his name; and as for the address, I never knew it! . . . I reflected. 'That,' I said, 'I am unable to do, for reasons of great importance.' 'Aha!' he said, 'reasons that will prevent his fighting us, I suppose?' 'On the contrary,' I said, 'reasons of far greater importance than that.' He was puzzled. 'But,' I said, 'I will convey your request to him. I may mention to you that I have heard he is the best swordsman and pistol-shot in Europe. Good night!' I wished to give them something to dream of, you understand. . . . Ah! my dear! Patience,

patience! Well, I was coming to you, but I thought 'No — we other journalists; it's our business to know everything; besides, to-morrow will do—there's plenty of time.' . . .

"Yesterday morning I came into the *Place*, and there he was on the bench, with a big dog. I declare to you he blushed like any young girl. 'Sir,' he said, 'I was hoping to meet you; last evening I made a great disturbance. I took an unpardonable liberty'—and he put in my hand an envelope with 'Roger Brune's humble regards' written upon it; my friend, what do you think it contained—a pair of gloves!—Señor Don Punctilioso, *hein?*" Jules scratched his cheek. "It seems to me I must have been bitten by some mad fly, otherwise how is it possible that I am putting my foot into it all the time. But, you know, he was the devil, this friend of yours; he fascinated me with his gentle eyes and his white moustachettes, his humility, and his flames—poor man! . . . I said, 'If anything comes of this, make use of me!' In fact, I told him I had been asked to take him a challenge. He made a chin: 'Is that so?' I declare to you he seemed to brighten. 'I am most grateful for your kind offer. Let me see—it is so long since I fought a duel. The sooner it's over the better; that's so, I think? Could you arrange for to-morrow morning? Weapons? Yes; let them choose.' . . . You see,

my friend, there was no hanging back here; *nous voilà en train.*"

Jules took out his watch. "I have sixteen minutes. Come! It is lucky for you that you were away yesterday, or you would be in my shoes now. I fixed the place, the right hand of the road to Roquebrune, just by the railway cutting, and the time—five-thirty of the morning. It was arranged I was to call for him with a carriage. Disgusting hour; I have not been up so early since I fought Jacques Tirbaut in '85. At five o'clock I found him ready and drinking tea with rum in it—a singular man! he made me have some too, brrr! He was shaved, and dressed in that old frock-coat. His great dog jumped into the carriage, but he bade her get out, took her paws on his shoulders, and whispered in her ear some Italian words; a charm, *hein!* and back she went, the tail between her legs. We drove slowly, so as not to shake his arm. He was more gay than I. All the way he talked to me of you: how kind you were! how good you had been to him! 'But,' I said to him, 'you do not think of yourself; have you no friends? nothing to say? sometimes an accident will happen!' 'Oh!' he answered, 'there's no danger; but if by any chance—well, there is a letter in my pocket.' 'And if you should kill *him?*' I said. 'But I shall not,' he answered; 'do you think I am going to fire at him? No,

no; he is too young.' 'But,' I said, 'I am not going to stand that!' 'Yes,' he replied, 'I owe him a shot; but there is no danger—not the least danger.' We had arrived; already they were there. Ah! bah! You know the preliminaries, the politeness—this duelling, you know, it is absurd. We placed them at twenty paces. It is not a bad place. There are pine-trees all round and rocks, and at that hour it was cool and grey as a church. I handed him the pistol. How can I describe him to you, standing there, smoothing the barrel with his fingers! 'What a beautiful thing a good pistol!' he said. I was so angry I cried out, 'Only a fool or a madman throws away his life.' 'Certainly,' he replied, 'certainly; but there is no danger'; and he regarded me, in raising his moustachette. . . .

"There they stood with the mouths of their pistols to the sky. '*Un!*' I cried, '*deux! tirez!*' I saw the smoke of his shot go straight up like a prayer; his pistol dropped. I ran to him. He looked surprised, put out his hand, and fell into my arms. He was dead. Those fools came running up. 'What is it?' cried one. I made him a bow. 'As you see,' I said; 'you have made a pretty shot. Messieurs, you had better breakfast in Italy.' We carried him to the carriage, and covered him with a rug; the others drove for the frontier. I brought him to his room. Here is his

letter." Jules stopped; tears were running down his face. "He is dead; I have closed his eyes. Look here, you know, we are all of us cads—it is the rule; but this — this, perhaps, was the exception." And without another word he rushed away. . . .

Outside the old fellow's lodging a dismounted *cocher* was standing disconsolate in the sun. "How was I to know they were going to fight a duel?" he burst out on seeing me. "He had white hair — I call you to witness he had white hair. This is bad for me: they will ravish my licence. Aha! you will see—this is bad for me!" I gave him the slip and found my way up. The old fellow was alone, lying on the bed, his feet covered with a rug as if he might feel cold; his eyes were closed, but still in his sleep he looked faintly surprised. At full length, watching the bed intently, lay Freda, as one could imagine she lay nightly when he was really asleep. The shutters were half open; the room smelt slightly of rum. I stood a long while looking at the face: the little white fans of moustache brushed upwards even in death, the hollows in his cheeks, the indescribable quiet of his figure; he was like some old knight. . . . It was the dog who broke the spell. She sat up, rested her paws on the bed, and licked his face. I went downstairs — I did not want to hear her howl. This was

the letter to me, written in a pointed, unreliable hand:—

"My dear Sir,—Should you read this, I shall be gone. I am ashamed to trouble you—a man should surely manage so as not to give trouble; and yet I believe you will not consider me importunate, for you have a noble heart. If, then, you will pick up the pieces of an old fellow, I ask you to have my sword, the letter I read you, and the photograph that stands on the stove buried with me. My will and the acknowledgments of my property are between the leaves of the 'Byron' in my tin chest; they should go to Lucy Tor—address thereon. Perhaps you will do me the honour to retain for yourself any of my books that may please you. In the 'Pilgrim's Progress' you will find some excellent recipes for Turkish coffee, Italian and Spanish dishes, and washing wounds. The landlady's daughter speaks Italian, and she would, I know, like to have Freda; the poor dog will miss me. I have read of old Indian warriors taking their horses and dogs with them to the happy hunting-grounds. Freda would come—a far nobler animal is a dog than a human being! She eats once a day—a good large meal—and requires a great deal of salt. If you have animals of your own, sir, don't forget that—all animals require

salt; I have seen them licking it off rocks. I have no debts, thank God! The money in my pockets would bury me decently—not that there is any danger. And I am ashamed to be wearisome with these details—the least a man can do is not to make a fuss—and yet I hold that he should put things straight, so as to be ready for everything.—Sir, with profound gratitude,

"ROGER BRUNE."

Everything was as he had said. The photograph on the stove was that of a young girl of nineteen or twenty in an old-fashioned dress, with hair gathered back in a knot. The eyes looked out at you with a little frown, the lips were tightly closed; the expression of the whole face was eager, quick, wilful, and above all, young; it bore the stamp of a singular limitation. One felt that behind was a nature which age and experience would never touch —which would think of the moment, the moment, nothing but the moment; a nature as far from his own as star from star—and he had worshipped her! I understood more clearly than ever that he had missed the point of his own story. He had exalted her—made a jewel out of her tinsel, and kept it bright to the end. He would not have been himself if he had done otherwise. . . .

The tin trunk was scented with pieces of a dried herb, which I have since been told is called

Hudson's Bay tea, the history of it in that trunk man knoweth not. . . . There were a few clothes, very few, all older than those he usually wore. Besides the Byron and 'Pilgrim's Progress' were Scott's 'Quentin Durward,' Captain Marryat's 'Midshipman Easy,' a pocket Testament, and a long, frightfully involved book upon the art of fortifications, much thumbed, and bearing date 1863. By far the most interesting thing I found was a diary, written up to the preceding Christmas. It was neatly kept, and to me, at all events, a pathetic document, full of calculations about the price of meals; resolutions to be more careful over this or that; doubts whether he must not give up smoking; once or twice sentences of remorseful fear that Freda had not had enough to eat. It appeared that he had been trying to live on £90 a-year, and send the remaining £100 to Lucy for the benefit of the child; in this struggle he was constantly failing, constantly having to send less than the resolved amount—the entries showed that it was a perpetual nightmare to him. The last words, written on Christmas Day, were these: "What is the use of writing this, since it records nothing but failure!"

The landlady's daughter and myself attended the funeral. The same afternoon I went into the concert-room, the place which somehow seemed to belong to him. When I came out, Freda was

lying at the entrance, looking up into the face of every one that passed, and sniffing idly at their heels. A little way off hovered the landlady's daughter, with her hand full of biscuits, and a queer, puzzled, sorry look on her face.

THE END.

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